

Face to Face
MAQRUR
of Paradise &
MASRUR
of Fire

By
Ahmad Bahjat





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&
Masrur of Fire**

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Preface

No doubt, that literature plays an important role in formulating our culture as well as our understanding. But the most important task that should be undertaken by the men of letters is to teach good morals and to bring to light the real essence of religion through their works.

Through the talent of the author, one can live out the reality of an imaginative experience to get its wisdom. That is what we will witness here in our meticulous work of art.

The events of the present story take place in both the worldly life and the Hereafter. The writer begins with a kind of conflict between good and evil that occurred in this worldly life. Masrur, who sought tyranny in the land by the abuse of his authority, exercised oppression against Maqrur who sacrificed his life in Allah's Cause. The temporary victory of Masrur ended with his death. Then the writer takes us into the realities of the Unseen World of the Hereafter to witness the real victory of good over evil.

Really, it is a great story that inspires wisdom to some and admonishes others.

Ahmad Bahjat, the author, managed with his touching words, emotional description and charming imagination to lead us through this journey to reach a conclusion that in spite of the tremendous efforts exerted by the tyrants to achieve some kind

of supremacy at the very near end they discover the fallacy of their triumph. This world belongs to the Almighty Allah, the All-Powerful and the Omnipotent.

We would like to thank Islamic INC for giving us the opportunity to translate this work and present it to our dear English-speaking readers. Admittingly, translation is an intricate task that requires precision and effort. We have endeavored to the best of our ability to produce this precious work, but Perfection is only Divine.

Due to the usage of certain terms and the nature of the subject as well as the nature of the Arabic language, the translation in hand is not literal. The translators have exerted their utmost efforts to make the text presentable and legible. On various occasions they have amended the Arabic text; by way of paraphrasing, rearranging and summarizing. Their aim is to present the essence of the story and convey its wisdom.

We would like to thank Al-Falah Staff Members, particularly, the translators team; *Nirvan Tal'at*, *Ahmad M. Hasan*, and *Huda Abbas* for their efforts in translating this work. Thanks should also be extended to *Said Fares* for revising the work. Great appreciation is due to *Umm Faruq Cook* and *Sarah Merhtens*, our editors, under their guidance and supervision the subject matter took form.

Finally, all praise and thanks are due to Allah, without Whose Help and Guidance nothing can be accomplished.

Al-Falah Director
Muhammad `Abdu

Introduction

Many years ago, in my column in Al-Ahram newspaper, I wrote a series that I called, "A non-story".

This story takes place in the Afterlife and its title was "Masrur and Maqrur".

Masrur was a ruler who was an unbeliever, whereas Maqrur was a true believer who sacrificed himself in the path of Faith.

In the story I traced the footsteps of their lives to the gates of Hell-fire and Paradise.

Many thinkers, writers and poets of different cultures have sought to explain man's journey from this worldly life to the Afterlife. This was a prominent theme in ancient Greek literature but has been clearly and truthfully portrayed in Islamic literature. It was greatly and deeply expressed by Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri in *Risalat al- Ghufuran*.

As I dealt with this interesting subject, I depended upon the books of *Tafsir* (Exegesis) and three books relating to the same subject. These books are:

- *At-Tawahhum* of Al-Harith al-Muhasabi
- *Scenes of the Other World in the Ever-Glorious Qur'an* of Sayyed Qutb
- *The Beauty of the Ever-Glorious Qur'an* of Sayyed Qutb.

At-Tawahhum is a work of creativity, innovation and originality. Al-Muhasabi used his imagination to express the various stages of man from his death until his entrance to either Paradise or Hell-fire.

The same kind of work was attempted in our time by Sayyed Qutb, who handled the same subject in two books. The difference between *At-Tawahhum* and *Scenes of the Other World in the Ever-Glorious Qur'an* is the difference between the time of Al-Muhasabi and that of Qutb.

Now let's enter the Other World through these pages.

Ahmad Bahjat

Story of Masrur and Maqrur

There have always been two kinds of men. Those who have plenty in this life and those who have not. Once upon a time, there were two such men. One of them was called Masrur and the other was called Maqrur. Often the names of people suit their situation and so Masrur and Maqrur were well suited to their names.

Masrur was the richest man in the city and the strongest one as well. However he was not as rich as Qarun (Korah), and his treasures were less than those of Qarun by one or two keys.

Indeed Qarun had so much treasure that it was put into chambers. The keys of those chambers were too heavy for a company of strong men to carry. In fact it took about seven or eight men just to carry the keys. Masrur only needed six men to carry his keys.

Now, Maqrur was very poor. He did not even possess a key for his small wooden hut that he had inherited from his grandfather. In wintertime it was enough for him to place a rock behind his door to keep it closed at night.

Actually most of the authors are used to write in the preface of their novels that the names of their heroes and the events that are to be narrated do not actually exist in reality, they only take place within the authors' imagination. Any resemblance between

the names of these characters and that of living human beings is not meant at all. What to write then in the preface of our story?

Our story has got imaginary names but real events that are true to life. Perhaps those events have not yet taken place but undoubtedly, one day they will take place. The matter is very perplexing but it is realistic.

These stories are based on real life events and situations that face mankind on a daily basis. It is hoped that by reading them, you will benefit from the wisdom of some and the mistakes of others. May Allah make us wise enough to not repeat the mistakes of others.

Our story starts in wintertime on a stormy night. The clouds hung low concealing the faint light of the moon and the wind blew roughly. Such violent weather conjured up fearful thoughts within even the most hardened hearts. The strong wind moved the rock that had been put behind the door to keep it closed. Thus, the wooden door of Maqrur was opened, the wind went through the hut and blew out the filament of the light bulb.

Maqrur got up very quickly and took away the sheepskin blanket he had huddled under, he was shivering as the wind whipped his bones. Then he hurried towards the door to close it and put the rock behind it again. He rested his bare feet upon the rock for a while and waited till the wind calmed down. Then he returned to his bed trembling from fear and cold.

Last Dinner

At the same time but in another place not so far away, Masrur was sitting in front of his dining table in his palace. The walls of the palace were made of polished granite rocks. The floor was made of a soft colored silver marble. Moreover, the Persian carpets were scattered haphazardly in a way that reflected a sense of luxury. The dining table was made of precious stones and its legs of pure gold. The plates were from gold but the cups were made from a peculiar kind of glass that is even more expensive than gold.

Masrur was sitting at the table, on a golden chair upon which he had put a fox fur. The face of the fox was long with an open mouth. The presence of this fur was enough to create an atmosphere of warmth.

The maid bowed so as to pour a cup of wine for Masrur. It was a good kind of wine and the smell of it gave the impression that there has been a large field of grapes.

Masrur turned his head and he picked a piece of grilled peacock meat and started to eat it leisurely. He was not thinking of anything important.

The wind was blowing violently around the palace but the polished marble was strong enough to resist the wind. From the crystal window Masrur stood contemplating the garden of his palace and the movement of the trees, then he said, "It seems

that the devils of wind were emancipated today." After saying these words he laughed.

The guests also laughed and flattered him. Masrur took another cup of rosy colored wine and soon he felt a little drunk.

He raised his head and asked the attendants, "Do you know how I got to be rich?"

They looked at him with eager eyes and said, "No we do not know, tell us, great master!"

"With each second that passes and with each grain of sand that falls, my wealth increases with a hundred pounds of gold," said Masrur.

They sighed deeply from surprise.

The door of Maqrur was opened again.

Dining Table

Masrur put his cup aside. He was torn between two feelings. Within himself he knew that a small fault would be able to scatter his gold everywhere. And in the end, there would be no one to celebrate it, perceive it as a virtue or even find someone to receive the crown of honor. He worried about little. He felt there was no real threat to his gold.

In fact he felt a deep sense of pride within himself. This pride was not because of his wealth nor because of the continuous increase of his wealth that exceeded eight million pounds of gold daily.

On more than one occasion he mentioned that his mind was actually the cause of his pride, his happiness and his misery too. He felt as if his wealth was hidden there, in a certain place deep within his consciousness. He had confidence in himself. This trust and satisfaction was attributed to his extraordinary ability to gain property and utilize it to its utmost potential. He also believed that this ability lay in the fact that he possessed certain knowledge within himself.

He used to count how much his property would increase in a day, a month and a year. Due to the fact that he possessed an excessive amount of money, he was unable to count all his capital. And this was the reason why he sometimes suffered from a haunting sense of failure and felt the narrowness of his empire.

Whenever he was alone, he lamented his inability to count all his capital. He was fond of speaking to himself ironically about his poverty. To him, the rich man was the one who could count his property while the poor man was one of two: either he had no money and was an idiot who deserved to be burnt, or had some profit which was even greater than his ability to count. He had never shared his perception - with others but kept it as a secret hidden within his heart.

Indeed, despite his wealth, he was a man who deserved sympathy and had a great need to be comforted, but at the same time he was not ready to have compassion for anybody.

Compassion and mercy may urge him to pay a penny for the poor, and thus, this penny would be the very beginning of loosing his property since million of pounds are nothing but an abundance of pennies. Then if he were to spend only one penny he would be threatening his wealth, the same as the string of a necklace that should it be torn, all its pearls, one after the other, would be scattered. He believed that each penny should be spent in a suitable way.

Masrur had paid eight million pounds of gold to buy some powder that was to be added to the wine of the king. Consequently, the king died while he was asleep. Thus, the millions of Masrur brought about his coronation. He became the king but without right or reason.

Dialogue

Masrur shook away these thoughts and began to contemplate his guests. They were the grand vizier, the chief judge, the spymaster as well as the chief of the night watchmen.

Masrur noticed that they were engaged in a hot dialogue, so he listened to them.

The grand vizier said, "Does he really say that when we die and turn into dust we will be raised up again to stand in front of Allah to be questioned?"

"Yes."

Masrur was overwhelmed with obscure horror, and he immediately interrupted the dialogue and said, "Who said that?"

The chief judge said, "Maqrur!"

Masrur said, "Who is this person?"

The chief of the night watchmen said, "He is a very poor man who lives in a hut at the borders of the city."

Masrur said, "Is he really the one who said that?"

The spymaster said, "No, he said that he heard those words from a prophet in the East."

Masrur said, "What prophet is he?"

The chief judge said, "He did not mention."

Masrur laughed cynically and said, "He is a mad man, because he thought the bodies of men were made of gold, not of dust. Who would care about collecting such dust from within earth? Are they gold?"

The spymaster laughed, and so did the chief of the night watchmen and the grand vizier. The chief judge smiled and said as if he was apologizing, "Who knows! What he said may be true."

Masrur said, "Do you believe that when we become dust we shall be raised up again in a new creation?"

The chief judge said, "Who knows?"

Masrur said, "You are not fit to be the chief judge!"

All the guests stopped talking, and a tense silence overshadowed the room. It was clear that the chief judge was dismissed by such a furious word. The hand of the chief judge that was about to start eating froze out of fear. He returned the food to the plate and remained silent, trembling out of fear.

He then tried to recollect his nerves and said, "My master Masrur, I did not say that I believe in what he said. I said only, who knows? I have not completed my sentence yet. I was going to say, 'Who knows? He may be a liar.' Your question enlightened the issue in my mind. Undoubtedly, he is an insane man suffering from high fever."

Conspiracy

Some sort of relief took place after the chief judge altered his words and returned to his usual carefulness. The chief judge tried to take his cup of wine without shivering but he failed.

The guests went on ridiculing the notion of being resurrected after death.

Listening to their dialogue, Masrur felt great disdain. In spite of the fact that they were mocking the notion of resurrection, judgment and reckoning, he said, "You gentlemen, you are talking like young boys. What did you do then to prevent danger?"

The grand vizier said, "What danger?"

Masrur ignored the question of the grand vizier and addressed the spymaster asking him, "What did the man say?"

The spymaster replied, "That we will be raised again from death to stand in front of only One God to reckon our deeds."

Masrur smiled and said, "That means that the man denies our gods, thus, there is a clear conspiracy."

The attendants reclined in their chairs. They were stricken by his words that were dropped upon them like a thunderbolt.

Very quickly, compared to the rest of the attendants, the chief of the night watchmen said, "My master, this idea occurred

to me before. We attentively observed Maqrur for successive days and we noticed that he has no relations with anybody. In spite of this we are still observing him. The man lives in a hut that is too weak to resist even the wind. Thusly, the door is open most of the time. We easily watch him from that door. The actual problem that we faced was our inability to know how people think. Consequently, we will not be able to delve deep within Maqrur's mind. We will loose nothing if we wait."

Masrur said, "O! You want to wait till he sets the whole system of the empire on fire. This system is the one that had chosen you to be the protectors and defenders against its enemies. Is not it the system that feeds you, shelters you and provides you with great authority to protect it? You are waiting till Maqrur himself takes his own steps first, after that you will start to move. This means that your steps will become subordinate to his. This is a great fault and total negligence on your part. Your steps should be the first and you should be the ones who initiate action."

Decree

All the attendants were silent till Masrur finished his words, and then everyone started to offer his suggestion to solve such a problem.

The grand vizier said, "You are right master, it is a conspiracy."

The chief of the night watchmen said, "The best solution is to imprison Maqrur."

The spymaster said, "The accusation is clear, Maqrur intends to set the system of the empire on fire, he despises and disdains our gods too."

The chief judge said, "The cause is ready, the decree is clear, such accusations deserve burning to death."

When Masrur laughed, the guests were relieved, they thought the problem was over but they were astonished by his comment when he said, "You still talk like boys: a conspiracy, an accusation, a cause and a decree. We are then turning the attention of the people towards such a man. We would be making a martyr out of him without reason. The best solution for him is to die as a result of a deplorable accident. He should go into a very long sleep -an eternal one- after drinking a cup of water. Then, the violent wind will open the door, throw the flame, and the hut will burn and Maqrur with it. Everything will

take place calmly without anybody noticing and without announcement. The night watchmen will then report that the man neglected to close his door and his negligence caused his death."

All the attendants nodded in agreement.

Masrur ordered the maid to pour wine again for the guests. The attendants drank wine which had the color of fire. Then, the guests started to compete in flattering their host.

The grand vizier said, "If it had not been for you, the whole empire would be lost."

The spymaster said, "What would we do without you? You are always our source of inspiration."

The chief of the night watchmen said, "Today, I learnt a lesson that my whole experience in all the previous years failed to teach me."

The chief judge found that it was his turn to speak, so he cleared his throat then said, "This is the first case in which the verdict of justice was delivered very swiftly, it was pronounced even before we finished dinner. The death sentence will be the penalty inflicted upon him. For a long time justice has complained of laziness but today it proved itself to be very speedy! This is actually a great achievement."

Prayer

Maqrur got up trembling from his sleep. The door of the hut was open so he went to close it.

Unexpectedly, he found a yellow dog with brownish eyes lying down at the entrance of the hut. When the dog saw Maqrur, it wagged its tail.

Maqrur said to himself, "Glory be to Allah. This is a guest that Allah has sent me." He looked around him and searched everywhere in the hut but there was nothing except a vessel that contained some milk.

Maqrur put the vessel in front of the dog. The dog looked at him with thankful eyes, and wagged its tail then started to lap up the milk. Maqrur left the dog to complete its meal and entered the hut. He washed his face, hands and legs, and he started to perform his prayers in humility.

He invoked Allah, "O Allah! Forgive me for my negligence in worshipping you, forgive me for my lack of benevolence to people, forgive me for my sins in old times and have mercy upon me on the Day of Judgment."

Maqrur's soul was exalted and purified, tears poured down his cheeks and they left their marks upon his face.

Maqrur smelt something very strange. Something that he was not used to. It was like sweet basil, but it was not the same as the

one known on the earth. He felt that he was not alone in the hut. Maqrur felt as if there was a strange being with him and since he was praying he was unable to turn around and look.

A certain feeling of satisfaction overwhelmed him. He started to recall his previous sins when he was a highway robber. He remembered how he had sincerely repented after he had met the noble Prophet during his journey to the East.

Maqrur said to himself, "Who knows? Maybe Allah has not accepted my repentance, if so, then I am damned and doomed to perdition."

He shed tears and prostrated himself before his Lord. The dog raised its head, wagged its tail and listened to his cries.

At that moment, the chief of the night watchmen as well as the spymaster arrived with a band of soldiers. Through the opened door of the hut they stood watching Maqrur while he was crying and prostrating before Allah, the Almighty.

Arrest

The spymaster pointed at Maqrur and whispered to the chief of the night watchmen, "We have caught him red-handed in the act of prostration to other gods than ours. Why do we not kill him now and be relieved from him once and for all? Was it not the command of our great master in the banquet? He ordered us to murder him in a deplorable accident, didn't he?"

The chief of the night watchmen said in a low voice, "Our great master has changed his mind. He summoned me this morning and ordered that we should bring Maqrur to meet him."

The spymaster said, "Do you think that he does not trust us? Does he want to kill Maqrur himself?"

The chief of the night watchmen said, "You always doubt others, why do you think so?"

The spymaster said, "It is my job. What do you think?"

The chief of the night watchmen answered, "I think our master wants to amuse himself first before killing him. Have you never seen a cat eating a mouse?! Does the cat eat it immediately or first play with it for sometime before swallowing it up?"

The spymaster said, "Then, he wants to play with him! I do think that there is a great danger behind all of this. He is now

prostrating, completely helpless and powerless, what a good chance if we kill him now, every thing will be over."

The chief of the night watchmen said earnestly in a low voice, "The commands are to catch and bring him alive to our master, not to kill him. Are you going to arrest him or will you leave the mission for me?"

The spymaster said, "No! It is your job. I have only to discover the truth. I will not interfere in your job and you should not too. Leave him to me, I have got various means of torture that make even the stone confess everything."

Masrur was sitting in his mansion to judge among people, when the watchman came to announce the arrival of the accused, Maqrur.

Masrur ordered every body except the grand vizier, the chief judge and the lasher to leave. After a while, the spymaster and the chief of the night watchmen entered holding Maqrur, who was tightly bound with iron chains.

Masrur sat quietly looking at Maqrur. He was wearing a shabby piece of cloth that left parts of his body uncovered. His feet were bare and dusty; his face was pale but peaceful. Great surprise was clearly reflected from his two pure and shining eyes. When he looked at the walls that were made of Sandalwood and sculptured with gold, he was even more surprised.

Investigation

Masrur was observing his prey and prisoner while Maqrur was observing the golden chair of the great master; his opponent and judge. Masrur was overwhelmed by the feeling of hatred and enmity, while Maqrur was overwhelmed with astonishment at such a luxurious life.

He was annoyed to meet the great master barefooted, as Maqrur considered it to be impolite. He should have taken his shoes off before entering to avoid tarnishing those expensive carpets. Unfortunately, he did not have the chance to do so. After Maqrur had repented, he became very poor, to the extent that he did not even own a pair of shoes. He was perplexed whether to tell his master this fact or not.

What Maqrur expected actually happened.

Masrur blamed him and said, "Where are your shoes?"

"I left them at a cave door of a mountain in Eastern Egypt. Since that time, I have failed to get another pair."

Masrur said, "Undoubtedly, you know of what you are accused."

Maqrur quickly started to think about his accusation. Verily, the previous ten years were void of any action that violated the law. Did the master mean his past miserable life?!

Masrur interrupted his train of thought and said, "You dog, speak. It is better for you to offer full confession."

Maqrur said, "Do you want a full confession?"

Masrur cried, "Yes!"

Maqrur said, "I will confess. I will say every thing to you. I was a highway robber, a thief who lived upon stealing and drinking. I was a very rich man and thusly women were used to chase me everywhere. Then I left all of this. I confess that I was guilty but that was ten years ago."

Masrur protested saying, "I am not asking you to tell us about your life story."

Maqrur said, "What are you asking about then, great master?"

Masrur said, "I am asking about your other crime. Theft and highway robbery are of no importance to me. Tell us about your other crime."

Maqrur thought for a while, then he said, "That was all sir."

Confession

Masrur winked to the lasher who immediately raised his lash and whipped the back of Maqrur. The lash whistled and fell upon his clothes tearing them to pieces. It left its bloodied mark upon his back.

Maqrur suffered anguish all through his body but he tried as much as he could to tolerate it and said to himself, "Praise be to Allah. Who knows that such torture may atone for my past sins."

The spymaster bent towards Masrur and whispered something in his ear. Thus, Masrur signaled to the lasher to stop whipping him.

The spymaster turned to Maqrur and said to him, "The great master does not ask you about your previous life, it does not matter to him. He asks about your present crime. If you really want to save your life then you should talk. Do not you want to save your life?"

Maqrur said, "Yes indeed, I have committed too many sins. What are you asking about exactly?"

Masrur said, "Your most violent one!"

Maqrur said, "I have been remiss in worshipping Allah. I have lived my whole life as a sinful disobedient slave and it was only ten years since I have returned to Allah, the Almighty. How shall I know whether He accepted my repentance or not? On the

Day of Resurrection and Reckoning everything will be known, but knowledge on such a Day will be useless, if Allah does not accept my repentance. Sir, these are my sins and my fears as well."

Masrur said, "You admit that there is a God other than our gods and say that we will be raised after death. Do not you say that?"

Maqrur replied, "Yes, certainly!"

Masrur said, "If we perish and turn into dust shall we be raised again?"

Maqrur smiled and said, "Do not you know that Allah the Omnipotent can easily revive the dead? We were actually dead and Allah gave us life, then He will cause us to die then bring us to life again. Do you doubt such facts! Where were you, great master before? Were not you dead and Allah, the Almighty revived you?"

Masrur disrupted his speech and said, "Stop talking, the accusation is evident. What does the chief judge decide?"

The chief judge said, "The accused is innocent. What he said is verily true."

Masrur shouted furiously, "The chief judge has gone mad, both of them are to be burnt, or wait ..."

Vision

Maqrur was driven to prison, while the chief judge was forced to have a drink after which he was held upon the shoulders of some men before leaving the mansion. It was said that he suffered a great pain that caused him to die and then the whole case was concealed.

The great master sent a special envoy to offer condolences to the relatives of the judge. Afterwards, a new judge was assigned to replace the former.

Maqrur stayed in his prison completely satisfied. He did not believe that they were going to burn him. That is why he asked the watchman many times, "Are you sure that I will be burnt?"

The watchman said, "I have no orders to reply to your questions, I am your watchman not your friend, we are not supposed to chat together."

Maqrur stayed in prison for three days in which he suffered from a state of confusion. He was distracted between two opposing feelings; sometimes he was happy and at other times he was sad.

He believed that if they were really going to burn him, then Allah, the Almighty accepted his repentance and decreed him to die in His cause. Maqrur thought that if they were only threatening him then Allah had not yet accepted his repentance.

Maqrur spent a lot of time praying and invoking His Lord to let him see a vision that bears glad tidings to relieve him. During the third night, Maqrur had a strange vision. He saw himself wandering in a green field that was full of trees, fruit and streams of water. The ground was made of musk; wherever he trod, his toes had a very pleasant smell. Then he saw a woman who resembled his former wife whom he had left after his repentance. She walked in front of him till they reached a garden high upon a hill where there was a strange palace that was much more luxurious than that of the great master. The woman pointed to the palace and said to Maqrur, "When will you come to us?"

He asked her, "Who are you?"

She then disappeared before replying to his question and he woke up from his sleep.

When Maqrur related his vision to the watchman in the morning, the watchman said to him, "Surely, you will die today."

Maqrur was overwhelmed by the beauty of the vision. After seeing this dream, Maqrur cared for nothing else.

The Death of Masrur

After Masrur had finished his dinner and had taken too much to drink, he took another bottle of wine to his room and asked his maid to precede him. On his way to the room he felt dizzy and his nerves were gradually weakening. The bottle fell from his hand and it was ruined.

Masrur tried to lean on the door of his room but he felt an intolerable pain in his shoulder. The pain started to move from his shoulder to his hands then to his chest. It encircled his chest like a burning golden band. He then fell down on the floor and the maid cried out loudly.

In a moment the room was filled with maids and watchmen, and together they tried to carry him to his bed.

The most skilled physicians in the whole empire arrived, and they all gathered around his bed. The face of the master was as white as snow. He was snorting loudly while breathing as if some one was slaughtering him slowly.

The head of physicians said, "What a bad sign! The great master has lost consciousness."

In fact, he had not really lost it as they thought but his consciousness was somewhere else.

Masrur had felt the presence of someone strange in the room even before he entered it. There had been an unknown guest

who bore no features. His face contained only warnings and threats.

Masrur asked him, "Who are you?"

The guest said, "I have come to offer you the inevitable cup, so put that bottle down."

Actually no body could hear this dialogue. They could only perceive the falling of the bottle from his hands.

When the unknown guest gave the cup to the dying Masrur, he said, words that none could hear, "What does it contain?"

The guest replied, "Have not you understood yet? This is the inevitable cup of mankind, each soul shall taste death. This is the inescapable end. It is only a few seconds away and you will depart from this earth."

Hearing the words of the guest, Masrur was thunderstruck, he cried out in shock saying, "I do not want to die, not now, I beseech you, take all my property in return for only one month, one week, or even one more day."

The angel of death removed the veil, the face could be easily perceived and thus, Masrur started to suffer the agonies of death. He felt the great bitterness of the cup, he could hardly swallow. The pulling out of the soul of Masrur from his feet was a grievous torment, the same as pulling out a thorny tree from a heap of wool.

The angel of death started to smite Masrur's face. After the second slap, the soul had reached the throat, where it resisted at its final gate; the mouth of the former great master.

The Death of Maqrur

While Masrur was suffering the agonies of death, Maqrur was being tied to a wooden column in a crematorium, which was prepared for him. He was to be burnt. At first, Maqrur was terrified when he was about to enter the fire but then unexpectedly, he encountered a strange being standing in front of him.

He was told, "Do not be afraid! Come on, you will not feel any pain and you will not die."

Maqrur asked quietly, "Who are you?"

"I came to you bearing glad tidings," came the reply.

"What are those glad tidings? ... Are you the angel of death?"

"Yes."

Maqrur said, " If I am going to be burnt to death, does this mean that Allah has accepted my repentance?"

The angel said, "You will not be burnt to death, your life will end before the fire reaches you."

"I wish I could be burnt in the cause of Allah."

"Do not despair! You are welcomed in the Hereafter. So grieve no longer."

Suddenly everything was become clear to Maqrur. His senses returned and he felt the sweat smell of basil. As soon as

the face of the angel of death presented himself, Maqrur's spirit left his body, and his soul remained alive and contemplated the beautiful face of the angel of death.

The executioner of the crematorium cried out addressing the commander of the prison, "Sir, the accused has died. Shall we burn him?"

The commander of the prison said, "It seems that he was afraid, so pour some water upon his face to wake him up then burn him. After that bury him in the tomb of the prison."

At the same moment, the angel of death finished taking the soul of Masrur and the movement of his body faded away. One of the maids started to wail. So the grand vizier ordered her to leave the room as well as all the attendants. Only the spymaster and the chief of the night watchmen remained.

Being alone in the room with them he said, " People will say that the great master has died. This is not true, tell them that he has gone somewhere and will return after a while. Now, you have to bury the corpse secretly within the tomb of the prison and the master's marble tomb should stay empty so as to convince people that he is still alive."

Late at night, the spymaster as well as the chief of the night watchmen carried the corpse in total secrecy and put it near to that of Maqrur, which had been placed there a few minutes before.

Ironically, Masrur and Maqrur were buried together within the same tomb and the door was closed.

Nevertheless, the grand vizier announced that the reign of the great master continued.

The Reckoning of Masrur

Both Maqrur and Masrur lost sensation after their death. Death had totally terminated their feelings. They both entered a completely new and different world. As soon as they entered their tombs, they regained their senses. This time, their feelings were strange and new as they embraced both life and death at the same time. Each one of them was fully aware that he had died and that he was brought back to life again.

Masrur was greatly astonished. Death had seized him and carried him away and woe was in store for him. He thought that death finalized one's feeling but now he realized the truth. He discovered that this belief was untrue and that feeling, on the contrary, is actually doubled and multiplied after death. One can perceive without an eye and can feel without senses.

No sooner did Masrur enter his grave than he felt as if its walls were compressing him fiercely. He screamed loudly but nobody heard him except animals and beasts of the surrounding region and they were greatly terrified.

Unexpectedly, Masrur encountered two angels in his grave. They made him sit up and thus his shroud sloped down off his shoulders.

One of them asked him, "Who is your Lord?"

Masrur was surprised by such a question.

The angel asked him again, "What is your religion? Who is your prophet?"

Actually, Masrur was unable to reply to these questions. Extreme terror tied his tongue and so he said nothing. One of the two angels pointed forward and commanded him to have a look. When Masrur perceived the center of kindled fire his blood froze.

He then asked the angel, "What is this?"

"This is the Consuming One."

Masrur was terrified, "Why did you make me see it? What have I got to do with it?"

"This is your dwelling place in the Hell-fire. Do you not know it? You have not yet answered my questions."

Masrur felt that they were interrogating him. He was filled with a feeling of great horror. He tried several times to answer their questions but he failed. What should he say? Verily, gold was the god he had worshipped and tricks and caprices were the religion he followed. As for prophets, he had never heard of them except that they were rebels. Thusly, he did not know what to say. He kept silent for fear that his words might agitate his investigators. As a result Masrur was subjected to severe torment within his grave.

The Reckoning of Maqrur

The angels of reckoning awakened Maqrur and made him sit up. Maqrur was overwhelmed by fear and surprise upon finding himself sitting in between the two angels, after he had been turned into ash. He started to recall what had happened to him.

First, he had been thrown into the crematorium and then he lost consciousness. Later after that, he encountered the angel of death within the core of the fire and he told him not to be afraid. As soon as the fire scorched him, he lost consciousness again. And now once again he regained his consciousness to find himself accompanied by two glorious beings.

He asked them, "Who are you?"

One of them replied, "We are the angels of reckoning."

Maqrur shivered with fear, and he then asked, "Is it the Day of Resurrection?"

The angel said, "No, not yet. You are in your grave. We only came to ask you three questions. Who is your Lord?"

Maqrur said, "Allah is my Lord; the Creator of everything."

The angel asked him, "What is your religion?"

Maqrur said, "I am a Muslim. I follow the religion of all the prophets and submit in devotion to Allah."

The angel asked, "What do you say about the prophet you met in the east? Do you believe in him?"

Maqrur said, "Yes indeed!"

The angel said, "Do you believe that Allah sent him revelation?"

Maqrur said, "Yes."

One of the angels pointed forward and said to Maqrur, "Look in front of you."

Maqrur looked in front of himself, and he saw a green field as well as the great palace, which he had seen before in his vision.

Maqrur turned to the angel and asked him, "What is this?"

The angel replied, "This is your dwelling in Paradise."

Maqrur was extremely happy.

He asked the angel, "Has my Lord accepted my repentance?"

But they did not reply.

One of them said to him, "Allah decreed that you should return to death now."

Indeed, Maqrur lost his consciousness again and he returned to his former state before encountering the angels.

Perish and.....

One year passed, a hundred years and then a thousand passed away. The corpses decayed within the tombs and finally turned into dust. Cities expanded to replace the ancient tombs that later on became houses. Then, those houses started to fall into decay and they turned into tombs again.

This cycle of life continued till the trumpet had been blown, then all that were in the heavens and all that were in the earth swooned away except those that Allah pleased.

All living beings passed away. The dead gathered and both the heavens and the earth were free of their inhabitants.

No sound and no whisper could be heard. No one could be seen and not a single living creature could be perceived treading on the earth or passing through the heavens. The earth became totally empty except for the wind that sounded its siren.

Death vanquished all living beings. However, Allah the Omnipotent, the Everlasting and the Highest remained forever established on the Throne. Ages and ages passed away.

Then, Almighty Allah ordained Israfil to blow the trumpet another time, so he took the trumpet and blew it and said, "They made not a just estimate of Allah such as is due to Him. And on the Day of Resurrection the whole of the earth will be grasped by His Hand and the heavens will be rolled up in His Right

Hand. Glorified is He and High is He above all that they associate as partners with Him!"

In fact, this second blowing of the trumpet ushered in the Day of Resurrection. Thus, the longest day in the history began.

Allah, the Almighty, says, ﴿Truly, We did offer Al-Amanah (the trust or moral responsibility or honesty and all the duties, which Allah has ordained) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it (i.e. afraid of Allah's Torment). But man bore it.﴾

Now the heavens, the earth and the mountains should perish and only mankind should be awakened (raised up) to be asked about this trust.

The impressive scene of the death of the universe was both wonderful and horrific. The day started with total devastation, for all the laws that controlled the universe and the firm rules that set previously galaxies into motion were devastated.

As soon as the universe started to perish the dead were enjoined to be raised from death and they submitted to the Will of Allah. They were revived again in spite of the fact that their bodies had undergone millions of cycles and alteration. The bones were decayed and decomposed. Flesh, blood and bones all turned into coal within the core of the earth, then they became dust.

Verily, the dead returned to a state of existence after having been nothing. The same as they had been created out of nothing the first time.

The Resurrection of the Dead

The earth cast out what it contained and what were in the graves were scattered. The dead were raised to life after death. This time, the souls would never be separated from the bodies again. The current of consciousness was reconnected after it had been cut off. They were all naked, barefooted and dusty.

When Masrur was revived in his grave, he found Maqrur standing beside him.

Masrur asked him roughly, "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

Maqrur said, "O my God! Were we not dead?"

The words of Maqrur caused great and sudden fear to Masrur.

Thus, Masrur feeling terrified asked, "I think that I have met you before, your face is not strange to me. Are not you the man we accused of treason?"

Maqrur answered him, "Yes, I was accused of treason as you said. The accusation made against me was that I believed in the Day of Resurrection and truly we are today raised from death."

Masrur said arrogantly, "You fool! We were dreaming, it was a dreadful dream. Where is the head of the night watchmen? Where is the spymaster?"

Deep within himself, Masrur started to think of Maqrur. He might be telling him the truth, he might have truly died. It could not have been a dreadful dream as he had thought.

Actually, the scene of the unknown guest, who presented to him the inevitable cup of death was not a dream. Moreover, the scene of the grievous torment in the grave was too harsh to be a dream. Then, it seemed to be that he had really died and then was revived again. This idea conjured up fearful thoughts within him.

Masrur contemplated Maqrur and he suddenly felt deep regret. It had been actually impossible for such a poor man to conspire against him. How could he have sentenced him to death? He now felt that the decree had been issued in haste but, he was not to be blamed. How could he trust the man and all the reports that were presented to him by his vizier and the spymaster confirmed the opposite.

Masrur noticed that he was walking unconsciously. There were thousands of dead people who were raised up from the same grave and they all crowded into the direction of a certain hole that was leading to the earth.

Masrur asked himself, "Where am I going so fast like that? Who ordered me to get up? Where are my clothes? Where is my palace? Where are my servants and soldiers? Who enjoined me to be raised from death and who moves my legs? Where is my power?"

All the dead were hurled out. Mankind got out of the hole and started to walk upon earth. The sun was also different from the one he had known. It was getting nearer and nearer to the

earth and was dying at the same time. Masrur was overwhelmed by a mysterious fear. He noticed that there were two unknown beings walking with him.

One of them was walking in front of him as if he was driving him somewhere without speaking. The other one was walking behind him. They attended to him in a way that resembled the strict adherence of a criminal to the witnesses. Thus, Masrur realized that he was not free to walk as he wished. Also, he realized that he was certainly arrested.

The Bursting of the Sea

Masrur stopped walking. So, the one who was with him asked, "Why did you stop?"

Masrur asked angrily, "Where are you taking me?"

The driver did not reply to his question and the witness pushed him from behind and said to him, "Do not you see that we are all commanded? Move forward and do not hinder the way."

Masrur started to move again and Maqrur was walking beside him but in a slower manner.

Maqrur was soothing himself with the constant remembrance of his Creator. He was saying, "O Allah, help me!" Also, Maqrur realized that he was being watched by somebody, who was leading him and another one, who was walking behind him like his shadow.

Maqrur asked one of them in a low voice, "What is going on?"

The being answered him amiably, "This is the beginning of the Day of Resurrection."

Maqrur said, "If such great terror is only the beginning, then what will the end be like?!"

The being said, "Hurry up!" And they started to walk again.

Group after group, nation after nation and people after people were raised to life from death. The earth was over crowded with people coming out of their graves and this was a clear sign of the end of the universe - the previous world - that they had known before.

One of the dead who had been revived again cried out, "Look at the sea."

All eyes were directed to the sea, which was dying too, but in its own special way. The sea burst forth like thunder in the air. Each molecule of its water and each nucleus of those molecules exploded. The fine weather of the sea turned into blue scorching heat while its water turned into fire and smoke.

Masrur and Maqrur stood amidst this huge gathering contemplating what was going on. They used to know that water puts out fire. It was one of the fundamental facts known to them of their previous world. But today, this fact had changed. Water no longer put out fire; on the contrary, it increased the fierceness of its blaze. Thus, this gathering started to move away from the sea.

The number of people who were coming out of their graves was continuously increasing. It seemed that earth was casting out a limitless number of human generations. There were so many men, women, children and old men with different faces, colors, languages and features of horror. This huge human gathering, amidst which Masrur and Maqrur were no more than two small points, was stretching and expanding all the time. There was a mountainous chain at the end of that scene, which was hindering the expansion of mankind.

Exploding Mountains

The human gathering started to get nearer to the mountains. Masrur was completely baffled by the bursting of the sea and the turning of its waves into fire and smoke. As for Maqrur, he became sure now that he had been dead and then he had been raised to life again. Yes, Maqrur was right: there will be a life after death.

But, how could it be possible for a sole man, like Maqrur, to realize a truth that was totally concealed from a whole system. Masrur approached Maqrur. He started to feel secure beside him.

Masrur asked, "What is going on and what does it mean?"

Maqrur replied, "This is the Day of Resurrection."

Masrur said apologizing, "In fact, you had spoken the truth. I hope you are not angry with me for the death sentence I gave you."

This time, Maqrur did not reply. His feeling of surprise was much greater than his feeling of honor.

But, Masrur had considered his silence as a kind of hidden enmity. Thus, Masrur moved away from him. Deep within himself, Masrur felt that great danger was awaiting him. He tried several times to flee from his watchmen. Sometimes, he was inclining unexpectedly to the right side or to the left, and then he tried to hide amidst this human gathering. At other times, he

tried to runaway very quickly but he finally discovered that his attempts were in vain and wherever he tried to flee, the watchmen would remain in front of him and behind him.

In fact, they were adhering to him in a strange way that filled Masrur with utter despair and failure.

Thus, he started to think that he should seek assistance. He thought that if the head of his soldiers, the spymaster and the head of the night watchmen were with him, the whole situation would have changed; at least he would have felt secure. Thus, he started to search for them. He looked everywhere around him but he realized the failure of his attempt. Searching for somebody in such a huge mass was like searching for a needle in a haystack.

Masrur felt total imprisonment. Helplessly, he was driven amid a huge gathering that was, like him, being driven too. But where were they going? Nobody knew.

When this mass approached the mountains, an appealing scene took place. The unseen powerful hand of the Almighty pulled out the mountains from their places and He raised them in front of that gathering to leave space for this mass to stretch and expand. All the heads of mankind were raised up to watch and perceive this horrific scene.

The mountains were passing as unnoticed as the clouds. Then they started to crumble into powder. After successive explosions the mountains were pulverized and became like scattered dust and smoke. The earth was smoothed to a level plain without any crookedness, protrusion or curving. It had been really a fearful scene. This mass of human beings started to spread all over the earth after the mountains were pulverized.

The Gathering of Wild Beasts

When tent pegs are pulled out, tents spread out into the desert. Similarly, when the mountains were pulled out the earth also spread out and was left alone facing the desert. Men started to move randomly in bewilderment.

They were inclining haphazardly with the inclination of the earth. There were no mountains whatsoever, it seemed that they had been crumbled. Mankind was greatly terrified. They realized that all this was a mere start for an unprecedented day and so fearful thoughts ensued and they trembled from fear of the coming horror.

Maqrur said to himself, "O Allah! Have mercy upon us. You are the Ever-Kind."

Masrur was extremely terrified. He felt that danger was hunting him from every side. Yet there would be neither death nor comfort. When the earth was split asunder and men were driven forth from their graves, beasts and animals were also getting out and the Jinn were gathering from everywhere.

In fact, the scene of the Jinn approaching mankind from the right side was really dreadful as they appeared in their true form. But as compared to the horror of the whole scene it was of little effect. The bursting of the seas and the explosion of the mountains were actually what cast terror into their hearts. The

Jinn too were greatly astonished as they used to play outdoors, in space between the stars but today everything had changed.

A huge mass of wild beasts started to gather around mankind from the left side. Their number started to increase; each moment a new group got out of the earth they bowed their heads out of fear. Actually, all kinds of beasts; lions, tigers, hawks, mountain goats, dogs, lambs and birds were being gathered together.

A group of lions approached Maqrur, and he shivered with fear. In fact, Masrur had hunted a group of lions before so he thought that among those gathered lions one of them would come to take its revenge. The lions however simply passed him and ran quickly by. Masrur noticed that among those lions there was a small mountain goat, which was running too. In spite of that the lions paid no attention to it. In addition to this the goat itself was not afraid of the lions.

Thus, it became clear that the horror of such a day had dissuaded the beasts from their beastly nature and innate instinct. Verily, the gathering of the Jinn as well as that of the wild beasts had aggravated the situation.

Masrur and Maqrur were now very close to each other. Masrur was suffering a bitter sense of fear and danger. He turned to Maqrur and asked him, "How long have we been dead? I mean how long have we lived before death? Or I mean how long have we been dead and alive?"

Maqrur replied, "Allah knows, I feel as if we had lived only few days or even a few hours. I think we had been alive for some days and we had died a few hours ago. Really I do not know."

The Final Moments

What was going on was certainly terrible and very hard for mankind, Jinn and beasts to bear. The earth was continuing to throw out its burdens since the time of Adam.

The huge mass now realized that this scene really was the Day of Gathering; the Last Day. They were convinced that their old and previous world, in which they had formerly lived, no longer existed. Everything to do with their previous life was now totally ruined and devastated before their very eyes.

The bursting of the seas, the explosion of the mountains, the devastation of the moon, the falling down of the stars and the emancipation of the sun, proved the destruction of the laws of nature that had previously controlled it. The old world was being totally destroyed.

The huge mass of beings now came to know that they were watching the final moments of their former universe. The clatter of debris as the universe fell down in prostration before Allah the Only One was overheard by everyone without exception. They realized that the whole universe was prostrating to its Creator.

As the decisive moment approached, they felt that the external terror of the scene was coupled with an internal horror within their souls. The sun approached the earth and Masrur approached Maqrur fearfully and asked, "What is happening to the sun?"

Maqrur was contemplating the sun while it was approaching the earth and he noticed that the more it approached the more it enlarged. Maqrur was struck dumb by the terror of the scene he had just witnessed and so he did not reply to Masrur's question.

There had been a sudden rise in temperature after the sun approached the earth. The whole creation started to sweat. Their bodies were dripping. The sweat mingled with the hot sand of explosions till Masrur felt as if he was walking in boiling water. Masrur's sweat had risen until it reached his knees, and his legs became very heavy. He was greatly surprised when he looked at Maqrur who was sweating too but not as much as him.

The sun came nearer to the earth and Masrur's legs became heavier. His sweat swelled around him until it reached his chest. However, when he looked again at Maqrur, he noticed that his sweat had only reached his ankles. Masrur felt that he was surely drowning and dying too. He was being led to a sense of deep despair.

To him, even death would be a blessing and a great comfort compared to his suffering now. He realized that death was an unattainable wish. The sweat rose until it reached his neck but in spite of that he kept on walking.

The idea that he might be drowned in his sweat was incomprehensible to him. The sun continued to approach more and more. Extreme horror overwhelmed the whole of creation so they started to run away.

Escape

The sun approached more and more. The earth stretched out more and more. The whole of creation started to flee. Some of them were escaping from each other. Masrur has been separated from Maqrur. He could no longer find him and started to run away towards the left. Mankind, Jinn, wild beasts, and birds were mingled together.

It was the crack of explosions, the tremendous upheaval that was taking place as well as the total destruction of all the elements of nature and the severe quaking of the earth, which drove the whole of creation to flee. Masrur also fled in terror, seeking some kind of rescue. Unfortunately, everything was over. He was filled with utter despair. He now realized that he was running aimlessly. It became clear that running and standing still were the same.

Suddenly, he saw the head of soldiers as well as the spymaster running beside him. A feeling of happiness arose inside him, he shouted out, calling them and when the head of the soldiers turned to him he discovered that his face was horribly scarred. It seemed that he did not even recognize him. Masrur then shouted out calling for the spymaster, asking for help but he was running away from him shouting out, "My soul ... My soul." He then disappeared while he was cursing and insulting Masrur. The happiness inside him faded away and he was filled with horror.

At that moment he became fully aware that his power had dissolved. He also realized that he was like a helpless rat caught in a huge trap, within this universal explosion. Masrur continued to run aimlessly; sometimes to the right side and at others to the left but he never stopped. Masrur escaped from him and when his mother and father passed near him he still did not stop. The grand vizier as well as the head of the night watchmen passed near him and they looked horrified.

Masrur discovered that nobody could save him and that is why he fled from his brother, mother, father, wife and children. He too could not save anyone. Realizing that he could not ever be saved aroused a feeling of intense horror within him. Now he was running aimlessly and it seemed that he was escaping from himself.

The horrors of that momentous day, the Day of resurrection, had turned him into a being mingled with fear revolving despairingly around itself. Maqrur too was fleeing the terrors of that day and he was continually invoking his Lord, the Most Kind, to remove this torment.

Moreover, the power of the Jinn faded away in front of such terrors. They were running away haphazardly along with those who were also running. The wild beasts adhered to mankind and the Jinn sought security but they were deeply shocked to perceive mankind escaping in terror.

The earth stretched out more and more. Sheer terror and despair overwhelmed all beings.

The Appearance of Angels

The earth continued to cast out the dead to its surface until there was no one remaining inside it. The resurrection of mankind, the Jinn, the devils, the wild beasts, the cattle, and birds was complete. They were all gathered in the same place and at that moment, the whole universe started to enter its final stage of destruction.

The earth was grounded to dust. The stars were scattered and the sun was extinguished then it started to cool down. The color of the sun turned from its glowing yellow color to red then finally it turned to black. The explosion of the sun produced a lot of crackling in the sky. The sight was dazing and complete darkness prevailed over the whole universe. The stars were extinguished and the moon eclipsed and thus darkness prevailed. The whole of creation stood still. There was no movement whatsoever.

Masrur was now shivering from cold after he had been dripping with sweat. It had snowed heavily and a thin white layer covered the whole ground. It was a horrific scene and Masrur suddenly went snow blind and so was unable to see Maqrur or to distinguish things.

The sky fell down to the earth and it was broken asunder. The divine ordinance decreed that all the ruling laws of the universal should be broken up and that was exactly what had

happened. The sky cleft asunder after it had been removed by Allah, the Omnipotent. The sky became as molten brass and its color turned into silver that was mixed with a terrifying yellow color. Finally, it turned into red.

After the heavens were cleft asunder and its gates were opened the angels started to appear. They were celebrating Allah's praise and extolling His Holiness despite being overwhelmed with fear and terror.

Masrur's heart was beating severely like drums that beat in the still night bearing ominous tidings of severe chastisement. Masrur was unaware of how much time had passed in such terror. He was also unaware of how long it had taken since he had been raised to life till the sky was cleft asunder.

What had surprised him most was still being alive in spite of all that he had witnessed. He was terrified to think that he would never die again. This idea filled him with horror and panic even more than he was affected by the horrors of that momentous day. Maqrur was trembling with fear and celebrating the praises of his Lord, the Most Kind.

He Forgot and so was Forgotten

How much time passed since the Day of Resurrection had started? Could it be ten thousand years or fifty thousand years? Could it be really one day that had passed? Those were questions that preoccupied Masrur's mind despite knowing that they were meaningless.

In fact, the succession of day and night and the appearance of the sun and the moon were signs that enable mankind to keep account of time, days and years in the worldly life. But today the sun faded away and time could never be counted. Everything was over. Time had transgressed the limit of account and thus it became impossible to recognize things.

The angels with their great bodies and glowing wings descended from the open gates of the heavens. They were trembling with fear and humility. This terror was attributed to the fact that Allah, the Almighty, was angry. All creation realized this fact. They realized that Allah, Exalted be He, was extremely angry and His anger was unprecedented and He would not be angry like that again.

Verily, the severe chastisement caused by such a horrific day was coupled with even more severe psychological torment.

Amidst that prevailing darkness the only light available was that of the angels descending from the heavens ranks upon ranks. They stood in rows bowing their heads. When mankind

witnessed this scene, they felt great fear and humility. The loud sound that used to be heard from billions of men, Jinn and beasts started to fade away until all sounds were humbled in the Presence of Allah, the Most Gracious, and nothing could be heard except a whisper.

The sky was being removed bit by bit until it totally disappeared, the same as the old earth and the whole revived creation. Those who were created first and those who were created last were brought forward to stand upon the land of gathering. This land appeared in a pale silver color that was pure of any sin that has been committed upon it.

The earth shined with the light of its Lord after it had spent a long time in utter darkness. This day the scene was enlightened with a new light whose source was not that of the sun or the moon. It was Divine and different light that enlightened the whole scene. At this moment, Masrur lost his sight and became blind. Almighty Allah took away his sight the same as He did with all other unbelievers.

Masrur was about to shout and cry out of terror but his voice was buried within his chest. He now became sure of eternal damnation.

He murmured, "O my Lord! Why have you raised me up blind, while I had sight before?"

Allah would say, ﴿Like this, Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) came unto you, but you disregarded them (i.e. you left them, did not think deeply in them, and you turned away from them), and so this Day, you will be neglected (in the Hell-fire, away from Allah's Mercy).﴾

The Earth Shone

The earth shone with the light of its Lord, and the Book was placed (open) and the Prophets and the witnesses were brought forward, it was judged between them with truth and they were not wronged.

Maqrur received the light of Allah, the Almighty, in the same way as a drowning man receives the glad tidings of being rescued. He was relieved by a new calming light and his fears settled down.

The earth spread forth and each being was presented in front of the angels of reckoning. Those angels who are the nearest to Allah, were holding a huge book of reckoning that was placed in front of the gathering. All sounds became more and more humbled. Jibril (Gabriel) appeared, overspreading the whole region with his glory, light and wings.

Amidst the resounding silence he said loudly, "To whom belongs the dominion this day? The hearts reached to the throats."

The whole creation answered humbly, " To Allah, the One, the Irresistible."

Jibril said loudly, "In the worldly life, you highly esteemed lineage and wealth. Thus you revered kings and princes, but today the most honorable of you is surely the most pious. Almighty Allah decreed that piety as well as purity of the heart are the true measures of grace."

Maqrur's horrors were pacified and he went on contemplating the glory and splendor of Jibril. Then he said to himself, "If Jibril is blessed with such glory and magnificence in spite of being only a servant, how is the Glory of his Creator?"

The scales of justice were set up and mankind was assembled before their Lord. Prophets and Witnesses were brought forward and the reckoning began.

At that moment Maqrur realized that he was facing the high court and he was worried that Allah may not have accepted his repentance and so he kept repeating the name of Allah, the Most Kind, to comfort himself. His sole remaining hope was to seek the kindness and mercy of Allah.

The terror of violent weather on a stormy night in giant forests was nothing compared to the terror raging in the heart of Masrur. He realized that he was to stand in front of his Lord for judgment. None of his deeds would be concealed. He had lived and then died and was raised to life again to be accounted by Allah for all his sins and offences.

He was unaware of the fact that Allah keeps account of everything. He had been preoccupied with his reign, power, gold and desires. He would never have believed what was happening to him that day.

The angels of reckoning started to give mankind and the Jinn their books of reckoning. Masrur was given his book behind his back. This book kept an account everything that was being presented before him so that he might hear and visualize what he had done throughout his whole life, from the moment of his delivery until his death.

Read Your Book

While the angels were presenting the book of reckoning to Masrur, they said to him, "Read your book. You yourself are sufficient as a reckoned against you this Day."

The same words were said to Maqrur as well and to everyone else in that huge gathering. Masrur felt secure at hearing those words while Maqrur, unlike Masrur, looked terrified.

Masrur thought that since he was the one who would judge himself, then he could easily find out an outlet. He would claim innocence and invent all possible excuses to defend himself. However, Maqrur realized the heavy burden of this responsibility that had befallen him. He imagined that the statement implied an obscure concealed threat like in the case of a judge who says to the accused, "How would you judge yourself? Actually, the accused is sure that the judge will finally judge by himself.

At first Maqrur was afraid to open his book but he risked it and opened it. He searched for his past sins but he did not find any. He only perceived one major good deed that was repeated throughout his book. He thought that he had been given a book that does not belong to him.

He bent towards the angels to inform them about the error and said to their chief, "You have given me someone else's book. It is not mine."

The angel amiably said to him, "Return back to your place. The book is yours, as we never do wrong."

Masrur said in a low voice, "The book does not contain sins. Where are the sins that I committed before?"

The angel said, "Say this to your Lord, the All forgiving, when you encounter Him."

Masrur said in astonishment, "Am I going to encounter Him?"

The angel said, "Yes, indeed."

Maqrur was extremely happy and said to everyone around him, "Look, read my book! Surely, I did believe that I should meet my Day of Account!"

Unlike Maqrur, Masrur was given his book behind his back and said to the angels of reckoning, "I have gone blind. I cannot read."

The angel said to him, "You will be reckoned several times... your sight will return to you to read and you will judge yourself and Allah too will judge you Himself."

Masrur shivered with fear and he started to read his book. He actually perceived his true abhorrent image as a brutal tyrant. The book of records had already recorded all his previous sins and offences.

He perceived his mean endeavors to gain authority and his disdainful crimes of killing, adultery, injustice, lying, and treasuring silver and gold. Like a mad man he went on turning the pages over and over searching for even one good deed that he might be able to use in defending himself. Unfortunately he

did not find any. In spite of the fact that Masrur had lost his sight he gained insight within himself. After he had read his book he felt great dislike towards himself.

The Trial

Masrur's trial began. It was said to him, "You are accused of blasphemy. You corrupted your people, restricted their freedom and controlled their will. You allowed nobody to oppose your unjust decisions. You attributed majesty and honor to yourself although these two features belong only to Allah, the Almighty. Now, what is your defence?"

Masrur replied, "I am not the only one responsible for these allegations. My viziers, the spymaster and the chief of night watchmen are also responsible. I want them to be summoned as witnesses."

The angels summoned them.

Masrur began to argue with his grand vizier. The grand vizier spoke impudently to Masrur by saying, "We did not deceive you. Rather you compelled us to follow your steps blindly. You destroyed us as you destroyed yourself."

Then Masrur turned to the spymaster and said to him, "You deceived me by claiming that false conspiracies were in circulation and that these required the murder of many innocent persons, didn't you?"

The spymaster replied, "These false conspiracies were the product of your ripe imagination! You enjoyed hearing them from us as a mark of our loyalty to you."

Anguish overwhelmed Masrur and he began to slap his face saying, "Why did they not oppose and advise me? I imagined their silence as a mark of content. Alas, these dogs ruined me as my people did when they endured our tyranny. If they had not endured us it would be better for all of us now."

Masrur continued uttering such words in a miserable way. He felt hatred and a sense of grudge against them all, as well as against himself.

Their argument continued to the point where each one of them tried to strangle the other. The angels ordered them to stop this behavior and to be well mannered.

Masrur's balance of good deeds was very light. He was sure he would be condemned.

Then the angels addressed him saying, "Almighty Allah created people and made them free, but you restricted their freedom through a pack of lies, fallacies and illusions. You over-estimated hypocrisy rather than the values of truth and courage. In a word, you changed the system of life. Now, what is your defence?"

The trial continued. The angels accused him of blasphemy, hoarding gold and silver, changing the system of life and murdering innocent people. However, he denied all these accusations and horrible crimes.

The angels of judgment began to ask him about his heinous crime against Maqrur.

At Last

The angels summoned Maqrur to face Masrur.

They asked Masrur (the culprit), "This man (Maqrur) had no sin, as you thought, but he believes in Allah, the Almighty, and the Hereafter. Why did you kill him? Why did you order your servants to burn him? You punished him with fire, no one tortures with fire but Allah, the Lord of Hell-fire and Paradise."

Masrur said, "I admit that I was reckless in murdering him. It seems that he is a kindhearted man. However, I am not completely responsible of this wrongdoing, so all the responsibility does not fall on me! The system that rules all of us murdered him as well as me."

Masrur was defending himself and Maqrur felt great pity for him. At that time everything was revealed. Maqrur has no need to hate or to feel hatred towards anybody as Allah removed from his heart any sense of human grudge and injury. As for Masrur, his hatred and grudge was increasing with every moment that passed. The more angels asked him questions and the more his followers, viziers and soldiers renounced him, the more he hated himself.

Then an idea crossed his mind and he regarded it as the final chance for his salvation.

He said to the Angels of Judgment, "Actually, I did not commit these awful deeds. Satan induced and deluded me. He alone bears the main responsibility."

Satan came as a witness. Masrur said to him, "You are solely responsible for these crimes, aren't you?"

Satan answered him ironically, "Did I ride you like camels and drive you into sins?! I made nothing but call you and you responded to me and I have no authority over you more than that. I am free of you. I do fear Allah the Lord of the Worlds. So, do not blame me but blame yourself."

Masrur denied his crimes and was busy defending himself. When the Angels of Judgment felt that he would continue his denial they relegated the entire case to Allah, the Almighty.

Hearing the name of Allah Masrur began to moan and cry, as he did not want to meet Him. Masrur begged the angels to do with him as they chose. He appealed to them to break him asunder and throw him to the hungry lions but not to take him to Allah, the Omnipotent.

Regardless of his appeals the angels carried him to the Throne and set him behind the veil of fear. Almighty Allah judged Masrur without a word or a look.

Allah, the Almighty, said to him, *"Did I not create you? Did I not bestow many blessings on you? Did I not ordain for you? How did you dare to commit such sins?"*

Masrur could not utter a word. However, his organs started to talk. Masrur was astonished when he realized that his brain, heart and skin talked and witnessed against him.

Masrur remained for a long time to be judged before his Lord. Thus, Masrur was convinced that he was going to perish.

Oh Servant!

The angels brought Maqrur to the Throne and set him behind the veil of mercy.

Almighty Allah said to him, *"O servant, say what you want."*

Maqrur said, "You are Blessed and Exalted. I am Your humble servant and no one knows my humbleness but You. I am Your poor servant and no one knows my poverty but You. I am Your weak servant and no one knows my weakness but You. I sought refuge with You from my humbleness. So You enhanced me with knowledge and monotheism. I sought refuge with You from my poverty. So You enriched me with celebrating Your Praise. I sought refuge with You from my weakness. So You strengthened me with Islam. I am humble, poor and weak within myself. However, I am noble, rich and strong by Your sustenance. O Allah, I came with my sins and wrongdoings but I did not find them in my book of reckoning!"

Allah, the Almighty, said, *"I kept it secret for you in the worldly life, and I forgive you today. We accepted your repentance and Forgave all your sins and wrongdoings. We changed your bad deeds into good ones as a result of your sincere repentance."*

Masrur prostrated himself before Allah while he was crying.

Allah, the Most Exalted, announced, *"Glorified and Exalted be I above all that which they associate as partners with Me! I am the Rich (Free of all wants). He who associates partners with Allah*

should take his reward from these partners as Allah has nothing for him but the Hell-fire."

The scene was tremendous. All the books of reckoning exposed what they had done. Also, all intentions were recorded and registered. What sort of book is this that leaves neither a small thing nor a great thing but has it recorded with numbers!

Angels began to judge everybody according to his mind, knowledge and circumstances. Humankind and Jinn sought the intercession of the Prophets and the angels. Allah the Almighty called everybody to prostrate. The believers prostrated, but when the unbelievers tried to do so they could not.

At that moment it became clear that the Hell-fire was kindled and prepared for the unbelievers.

The angels started to set up *as-Sirat* (the Path). It is extended above the Hell-fire and at its end there is Paradise. It seemed to the believers to be a wide bridge that could be crossed easily by Allah's Mercy. As for the unbelievers it seemed to be like a hair.

The Bridge of *As-Sirat*

Before the command was issued for all people to cross over *as-Sirat*, a caller said, "Bring death."

A black animal that was similar to a ram was brought.

The caller said loudly, "Slaughter death."

The angels stroke death with their wings that were similar to lightning. Death started to die and then it completely vanished.

The caller said, "Now it is a new and everlasting life where you will find no death at all."

The command was issued for people to cross. The believers rushed onto the bridge whereas the unbelievers moved backwards. Masrur drew back with the unbelievers, wearing a garment of tar.

He did not know how he came to wear this garment. All he knew was that the final words about death struck his soul and preoccupied his mind with horror.

Masrur asked himself, "What does slaughtering death mean?"

Actually his final and only hope was to die. He hoped to die when the Day of Judgment started and when its great events took place. He hoped to die when the angels began to judge him and when he stood before Allah, the Almighty, behind the veil

of fear. However, unfortunately, he did not die. Death was his final refuge; by its destruction his hopes vanished forever.

Maqrur looked at *as-Sirat* and he saw flames and blazes coming out from beneath it like a hungry monster that opens its mouth to swallow a long-awaited prey.

The Hell-fire was almost bursting with fury and its blaze was trembling out of fear of Allah's torment if it did not perform its duty.

Maqrur talked to himself saying, "If the Hell-fire is trembling out of fear of Allah then what about us!"

Masrur contemplated *as-Sirat*. It was very long without end. Its width appeared to be that of a hair. The angels started to push him forwards to cross it.

An angel said to him, "You are in a very distinguished group. You are with Pharaoh, Qarun and Haman. Are you not the great master? Was it not your title in the worldly life? Damn you all, how did you dare to defy Allah, the Almighty?!"

Prostration

Place ... The Hereafter

Time ... New on its own occasion

All creatures were standing before Almighty Allah ...

The Divine command calling for prostration was issued. Allah, the Almighty, says, ﴿(Remember) the Day when the Shin shall be laid bare (i.e. the Day of Resurrection) and they shall be called to prostrate (to Allah), but they (unbelievers) shall not be able to do so. Their eyes will be cast down, ignominy will cover them; they used to be called to prostrate (offer prayers), while they were healthy and good (in the life of the world, but they did not).﴾

Allah, the Almighty, issued His Command for all creatures to prostrate to Him. As soon as Maqrur heard his Lord's Command, he prostrated.

As for Masrur, he was shaken by this Divine command. However, he remained standing. He contemplated the place. He realized that all creatures, from Adam to the Day of Judgment were of two categories; a group prostrated to Allah and another group were frozen in their place with fear.

Maqrur recalled his previous days when he was able to prostrate but he did not. Today, he wanted to prostrate but he could not. His ability to make choices had vanished just as

the worldly life. He was no longer able to decide, so he felt great loss. He realized that he had failed in the test of this worldly life.

Once again he tried to prostrate but he could not. There were many paralyzed limbs that were deprived of the ability to prostrate in the Hereafter because they had refused to prostrate in the worldly life. This deprivation was their fair punishment.

Judging the Tyrants

Pharaoh confronted Musa (Moses) with an overpowering sense of humiliation.

Then he was judged by Allah, the Almighty.

Allah is the One Who judges all human beings on the Day of Judgment through His Vast Knowledge and Supreme Power.

It was said to Pharaoh, "You are accused of claiming divinity and of harming people out of pure tyranny ... Guilty or not guilty?"

Pharaoh replied, "Not guilty ... Claiming divinity is just a norm that is followed by kings. As for being a tyrant in harming people; it was an attitude that should be followed because common people sometimes act like animals that need to be guided, by force and strictness. Thus this cannot be called tyranny; rather it is considered an important aspect of ruling."

The penalty for Pharaoh's sins was his eternal damnation in Hell-fire. Pharaoh was judged severely because he used his free will and chose to follow evil. Pharaoh failed to estimate the extent of the misfortune that awaited him.

It was said to Pharaoh, "You are found guilty of killing the children of Banu Israel and raping their women as well. Guilty or not guilty?"

Pharaoh said, "Not guilty ... Because the determination of those children's destiny was left to the board of viziers headed by Haman. Moreover, I did not actually read their verdict. I just asked Haman about what it contained. Haman did not point out anything to me that could be considered wrong. As for raping women, this is the first time I heard about it, and I am ready to hold an immediate investigation and reveal the facts."

It was said to Pharaoh, "You are guilty of wronging the Egyptians although you were entrusted with them ... Guilty or not guilty?"

"No, not guilty." Pharaoh insisted.

Judging Pharaoh

Pharaoh said, "Not guilty. Saying that I wronged the Egyptians is incorrect because I was merely instructing them. The Egyptian people are never satisfied with anything and that is why they needed strictness in guiding them to the right path. And guidance can never be provided without severity."

It was said to Pharaoh, "You are charged with killing the magicians when they believed in Allah and so prostrated to Him. What do you have to say about this ... Guilty or not guilty?"

Pharaoh said, "Not guilty. As for those magicians there are many vague points that have to be clarified. First of all, Haman told me that there was a conspiracy between Musa and those magicians, and the intelligence agency confirmed this conspiracy. Thus my jurisdiction enabled me to act in the way I saw best in handling the matter, so I had them crucified on the stems of palm trees. All I have done was to implement the law that I represented. That is all."

Pharaoh was asked, "Have you finished talking? Did you say all you have to say? Are you done talking?"

He answered, "Yes."

Then it was Haman's turn to testify.

Haman said, "Pharaoh is trying to pass the blame of his crimes onto me. He is trying to make it appear that I am the one

responsible for all those crimes, while the truth was that we were only executing his orders. And I bear testimony to the fact that Pharaoh has lied in all he has said. Besides, it is unmanly to discharge himself from all his crimes and accuse us instead."

At this point Pharaoh was ordered to defend himself.

So he started to blame his viziers, the army and the leaders of his army. He was trying to prove that he was the last person to know the reality of what had happened.

When Pharaoh had finished testifying, the time for hearing the testimony of his organs and senses had come.

As soon as Pharaoh finished speaking, his tongue ceased talking and his senses were ordered to speak; so his skin, hands, and legs talked. Both his mind and heart admitted that he had lied in all he had uttered. The judgment was pronounced that he was to be among those to be cast into Hell-fire. What an awful wood for fire they are!

The Question

After judging people Allah will ask those who ascribe partners to Him, ﴿ *Where are your partners (false deities) whom you used to assert (as partners in worship with Allah)?* ﴾

The aim of this question is to condemn and reject this evil act. How do you think the unbelievers replied? One should bear in mind that Almighty Allah is the One Who is asking. Moreover, Allah knows the unrevealed and the unthinkable. He also knows what can appear disillusioning to human beings and He knows what a person hides within himself.

The following verse outlines a short conversation that took place between Almighty Allah and those who disbelieved in Him and ascribed partners with Him.

Allah, the Almighty, says, ﴿ *And on the Day when We shall gather them all together, We shall say to those who joined partners in worship (with Us), "Where are your partners (false deities) whom you used to assert (as partners in worship with Allah)?" There will then be (left) no Fitnah (excuses or statements or arguments) for them but to say, "By Allah, our Lord, we were not those who joined others in worship with Allah." Look! How they lie against themselves! But (the lie) which they invented will disappear from them.* ﴾

Such unbelievers lie in the presence of Allah, they deny that they had ascribed partners to Him. They are not only lying to themselves but also trying to lie to Allah.

Maqrur watched what was going on around him, for he was relieved knowing what awaited him in Paradise. He was greatly astonished at the stupidity of the unbelievers. They never came to know what was meant by truth for they never practiced it in their lives. They never believed in the existence of Hell-Fire, and used to mock at the Muslims, who feared the punishment of Allah and hoped for His reward in Paradise.

Ironically what they used to deny was what became their eternal abode.

The Core Issues of the Case

The life of the world has come to an end. It seems that life passed in no more than an hour, even if a person had lived for seventy years or more. Life passed quickly ... mankind vanished then was resurrected by Allah, the Almighty, to be confronted by the fire.

The unbelievers never believed in the Day of Judgment, punishment and being reckoned for their deeds. They did not believe in the existence of Hell-Fire. But after death, there they were standing before the fire in a most terrifying and frightful scene.

This awful scene made those unbelievers beseech Allah, the Judge, saying, "If we were to be brought back to life we would believe in the Signs of Allah and we would be among those who believed in Him."

When the same unbelievers were alive they used to mock at the believers but yet, in the Hereafter they wished they could return back to life in order to believe in Allah's Signs and to be among those who believed in His existence! How things change!

This meant they were asking Allah for another chance. They wanted to be brought back to life to embrace Islam and to perform righteous deeds.

But how many chances had Allah given them in life?

How could they dare to ask for another chance?

Their plea was rejected.

Life is a trial that can never be repeated and once Almighty Allah reckons His creatures there is no turning back.

Allah said that the unbelievers were liars and that if they were returned back to life they would resume committing sins.

Allah, the Almighty, says, ﴿ *If you could but see when they will be held over the (Hell) Fire! They will say: "Would that we were but sent back (to the world)! Then we would not deny the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, revelations, etc.) of our Lord, and we would be of the believers!" Nay, it has become manifest to them what they had been concealing before. But if they were returned (to the world), they would certainly revert to that which they were forbidden. And indeed they are liars. And they said: "There is no (other life) but our (present) life of this world, and never shall we be resurrected (on the Day of Resurrection).* ﴾

This verse is the core and essence of the whole issue.

O Allah Send Me Back!

Maqrur noticed that there were certain words and phrases repeated by the unbelievers, criminals, and the like ... these words were, "My Lord! Send me back! So that I may do good" and, "(Alas!) If we only had a chance to return (to the world) we shall truly be among the believers!"

Their words indicate a kind of hope that they could return back to life with a changed heart and mind, that they would repent of the sins they had committed. However, all their pleas and invocations were rejected because it was time for judgment. There was no opportunity to return.

Life was the abode of examination and affliction while the Hereafter is the abode of judgment and reward. Hence, in the Hereafter it is time for being judged for one's deeds. Since Allah knows that the unbelievers are liars and that they would return to their old ways, He answered them saying, *﴿If they were returned (to the world), they would certainly revert to that which they were forbidden. And indeed they are liars.﴾*

They never believed in resurrection. They used to say, "There is no (other life) but our (present) life of this world, and never shall we be resurrected."

Also they said, "When we are bones and fragments (destroyed), should we really be resurrected (to be) a new creation?"

Allah answered them all, ﴿And he puts forth for Us a parable, and forgets his own creation. He says: "Who will give life to these bones when they have rotted away and have become dust?" Say (O Muhammad): "He will give life to them Who created them for the first time! And He is the All-Knower of every creation!"﴾

Satan's Declaration

In the Hereafter, there will be a lot of arguing with Satan. Many people would justify their sinful acts as a result of being deluded by Satan.

Furthermore, some people considered Satan as being responsible for their sins and that he was their controller.

In short, all sinners blamed Satan. Hence, this idea had to be changed. To do so, Satan himself had to speak and defend himself ... so he said, "Verily, Allah promised you a promise of truth. And I too promised you, but I betrayed you. I had no authority over you except that I called you, so you responded to me. So blame me not, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I deny your former act in associating me (Satan) as a partner with Allah (by obeying me in the life of the world)."

This was Satan's declaration.

Although by nature there was hatred inside human beings for Satan and although he was the enemy of mankind, yet Satan's declaration appeared to be most reasonable. Satan denied that he had the ability to force the human race to sin. He refused the notion that he had any power over mankind. He argued that he only seduced, suggested and ornamented unlawful deeds to humans.

In other words, Satan used to suggest but it was mankind who considered and applied the unlawful acts in different forms. Thus those who blamed Satan and accused him of being responsible for their sinful acts were merely evading responsibility.

Actually, at first, Satan was an affliction to Adam, then to mankind as a whole. Satan was not able to force man to commit sins. So if man sinned then he would be responsible for submitting himself to Satan.

Such submission was not justified, so man would be responsible for his own actions.

Without an Interpreter

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "On the Day of Judgment, each one of you will stand in front of Allah and there will be neither a veil nor an interpreter between him and Allah, and Allah will ask him, "Did not I give you wealth? Did not I bestow on you My Blessings? Did not I sustain you with My Giving?"

Man will answer, "Yes."

Allah will ask, "Did not I sent My Messenger to you?"

Man will answer, "Yes."

Then Allah will ask,

"O man! What has made you careless concerning your Lord, the Most Generous?"

O man, what did you do to please Me?"

O man you did not fear Me!"

O man how did you receive the call of the Messengers?"

O man you used to look to what was unlawful although you knew I was watching you.

You used to listen to what was forbidden although you knew I heard what you were listening to.

You used to utter what was unlawful although I was there to listen to you.

Was not I there to see you while you were walking to unlawful places (where sins were being committed)?

Was not I there to watch your heart and know your evil desires and intentions?

Did not you deny My existence and My Power over you?"

These were the words told to Masrur while he was being judged, and he could find no answer with to defend himself.

He trembled out of fear because Allah was reckoning him for every small detail of his life. All his deeds were brought against him, on top of them was his disbelief and his murder of those who were calling for the spread of justice, like Maqrur.

Allah said to Masrur, *﴿If anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind.﴾*

This is what you were guilty of so, your abode is in Hell-fire.

As for Maqrur matters were very different. He died for the sake of defending and trying to spread monotheism.

As a result he received his book of reckoning with his right hand and this meant that Allah sent him glad-tidings and he was promised to enter Paradise.

Pharaoh and Haman

Masrur was walking among the group of tyrants who were being led to the fire. He saw that Pharaoh, Haman and Qarun were in the front of all these evil tyrants.

Pharaoh told Haman, "It was your testimony that brought me to such loss! I do not know how you dared to accuse me of being a tyrant and a liar."

Haman did not answer him because he was trying to understand what was going on around him, he only concluded that Pharaoh was the one who had caused him to be lost.

Pharaoh was busy reading his book of reckoning and viewing its audiovisual pages that recorded all the details of his life.

Pharaoh stopped at a scene between him and Haman ... one, which took place in life.

.....

Pharaoh told Haman, "It is obvious that you love me Haman."

With great joy Haman said, "Love is not the suitable word to express my feelings towards you, my lord ... I worship you Master Pharaoh ... I truly worship you."

Pharaoh said, "That is satisfactory You make me feel more confident and the first duty assigned to a vizier is to return confidence to his lord."

Haman said, "Me and all your servants obtain our confidence from you my lord."

Pharaoh said, "Did you hear the story of Musa where he claimed that there is a God in the heavens? How can we get to him Haman?"

Haman said, "Order me to build you a tower that reaches the sky Pharaoh."

Allah, the Almighty, says, ﴿And Pharaoh said, O Haman! Build me a tower that I may arrive at the ways. The ways of the heavens, and I may look upon the God of Musa (Moses) but verily, I think him to be a liar.﴾

Haman said, "There is no need for such a tower my lord. Undoubtedly Musa is a liar."

.....

On this point Pharaoh closed his book and resumed talking to Haman.

He said, "In my book of reckoning I saw you talking ... you are the one who convinced me that Musa is not a Prophet, you told me he was a sorcerer who plotted with other magicians to destroy my kingdom."

Haman said, "Leave me alone, Pharaoh! Your worthless power, wealth and kingdom are doomed to the fire. Do not you realize what is going on around you?! Cannot you see the dreadful punishment that awaits us because of your vain

Those Who Ruled with Fear

All the tyrants of life stood before the Ruler of both the heavens and the earth, and they were judged for their sins, which were recorded in their books.

Almighty Allah says, ﴿They will say, "Woe to us! What sort of Book is this that leaves neither a small thing nor a big thing, but has recorded it with numbers!" And they will find all that they did, placed before them, and your Lord treats no one with injustice.﴾

The tyrants and evil rulers were acquiring higher positions in the earth and were oppressing societies and nations. Moreover, they began their lives with wealth and power. They used to give from their wealth as a reward to those who obeyed them, they misused their power on those who objected to them or defied them.

All those tyrants ruled their nations with fear, terror, slaughtering and oppression in spite of their (the tyrants) different nationalities and homelands.

A tyrant went to extremes in the oppression of his subjects until he overpowered his nation and made them submissive. After that the tyrant became the one who took all decisions on behalf of his nation.

But when such tyrants stand in Allah's Presence on the Day of Judgment He will ask them, "*Why did you usurp people's will and freedom that were the cornerstone of human dignity?*"

The tyrants would then be asked questions and they would spend a lot of time in being judged. They would try to evade responsibility and start to blame those who used to help them and provide them with help. Such lies can have their effects in life but not on the Day of Judgment. Allah is the One Who judges between people, and He is the Only One Who knows all secrets and whatever is hidden. For this reason, there is no use lying because lying incurs Allah's Wrath.

Thus, finally they will be doomed to Hell-Fire and will be restrained in chains.

Mutual Disputations

The quarrels of the poor are characterized by high voices and continual fights using different insults. The rich people are characterized by leading a peaceful and calm life.

This is what happened during life, where money has its role in making rich people happy and settled, whereas poor people are always fighting.

But in the Hereafter it is different. In the worldly life money buys goods as well as people. It is able to make people powerful and strong. Whereas in the Hereafter there is no money in Paradise. Money in the Hereafter only serves as a tool for torturing the tyrants.

Allah says, *﴿ And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the Way of Allah, -announce unto them a painful torment. On the Day when that will be heated in the Fire of Hell and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs, (and it will be said unto them), "This is the treasure which you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what you used to hoard." ﴾*

There is continuous quarreling in the Hell-fire.

There is a continuous exchange of accusations, those who were already judged and doomed to hell await those who will join them, with hatred and envy.

Allah says about those, who are already in the fire and those who will join them, ﴿ *This is a troop entering with you (in Hell), no welcome for them! Verily, they shall burn in the Fire! (The followers of the misleaders will say), "Nay, you (too)! No welcome for you! It is you (misleaders) who brought this upon us (because you misled us in the world), so evil is this place to stay in!" They will say, "Our Lord! Whoever brought this upon us, add to him a double torment in the Fire!"* ﴾

Also, He says, ﴿ *Verily, that is the very truth, the mutual dispute of the people of the Fire!* ﴾

There is a continuous dispute among the people of the Hell-fire, among the kings who claimed they were gods, and their viziers and men, and between masters and their subordinates.

There is also dispute between man and himself.

Shortly, there is no peace of any sort in the Hell-fire, but only hatred, envy and struggle.

Destructive Friendship

Relations are usually based on one's interest or true friendship. Friendship may either help or destroy the people involved.

Allah, the Almighty, describes a scene of destructive friendship in His saying, ﴿And (remember) the Day when the *Zhalim* (wrong-doer, oppressor, polytheist, etc.) will bite at his hands, he will say: "Oh! Would that I had taken a path with the Messenger (Muhammad). Ah! Woe to me! Would that I had never taken so-and-so as a friend! He indeed led me astray from the Reminder (this Qur'an) after it had come to me. And Shaitan (Satan) is ever a deserter to man in the hour of need."﴾

This *Zhalim* (oppressor) was on the straight path until he followed the footsteps of his friend, who believed in nothing but passing moments of pleasure. This friend had his own philosophy that was based on clutching at any kind of pleasure whenever and wherever they could be obtained, regardless of values and morals.

He indulged in women, wine and many different kinds of forbidden pleasures. The *Zhalim* followed blindly in his friend's footsteps and forgot his Lord and the trust that was given to him. So he lost his faith.

Finally, they were all dragged into the Hell-fire.

Another scene took place in Paradise which is quite the opposite of the previous one. Its heroes were those who dwelt in the gardens of delight.

Almighty Allah says, ﴿Then they will turn to one another, mutually questioning. A speaker of them will say: "Verily, I had a companion (in the world), who used to say: 'Are you among those who believe (in resurrection after death). (That) when we die and become dust and bones, shall we indeed (be raised up) to receive reward or punishment (according to our deeds)?"' (The man) said: "Will you look down?" So he looked down and saw him in the midst of the Fire. He said: "By Allah! You had nearly ruined me. Had it not been for the Grace of my Lord, I would certainly have been among those brought forth (to Hell)." (Allah informs about that true believer that he said): 'Are we then not to die (any more)? Except our first death, and we shall not be punished? (After we have entered Paradise).'﴾

The above-mentioned verses relate to a story of two friends. One of them did not believe in the Day of Resurrection and the other was about to follow him but for Allah's Mercy.

The unbeliever did not realize that the Day of Reckoning is true and Allah does all what He wants.

Almighty Allah says, ﴿Verily, His Command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, "Be!" and it is!﴾

Levels

In both Paradise and Hell-fire there are different levels and kinds. There is the Paradise of `Adan, the Paradise of *al-Firdaws* and many others that we are not acquainted with. The least of these exceeds all that this worldly life can offer.

Also, there are different levels in the Hell-fire. *Saqar* is the most horrible place in Hell-fire, in which all the tyrants such as Pharaoh, Haman, Qarun and the like will be thrown.

The dwellers of Paradise will definitely ask about the dwellers of *Saqar*.

Almighty Allah says, ﴿Every person is a pledge for what he has earned, except those on the Right, (i.e. the pious true believers of Islamic Monotheism); in Gardens (Paradise) they will ask one another about Al-Mujrimun (polytheists, criminals, disbelievers, etc.), (And they will say to them): "What has caused you to enter Saqar?" They will say: 'We were not of those who used to offer their Salat (prayers), nor we used to feed Al-Miskin (the poor). And we used to talk falsehood (all that which Allah hated) with vain talkers. And we used to belie the Day of Recompense until there came to us (the death) that is certain.'﴾

.....

Al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah was among those who were in *Saqar*. The Quraysh summoned him to offer an opinion about

the Ever-Glorious Qur'an. He said, "It is not divine. It is merely some words of a human being."

Almighty Allah says, ﴿Leave Me Alone (to deal) with whom I created Alone (without any means, i.e. Al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah). And then granted him resources in abundance. And children to be by his side! And made life smooth and comfortable for him! After all that he desires that I should give more! Nay! Verily, he has been stubborn and opposing Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.). I shall oblige him to (climb a slippery mountain in the Hell-fire called As Sa'ud, or to) face a severe torment! Verily, he thought and plotted; so let him be cursed! How he plotted! And once more let him be cursed, how he plotted! Then he thought. Then he frowned and he looked in a bad tempered way. Then he turned back and was proud. Then he said: "This is nothing but magic from that of old. This is nothing but the word of a human being!" I will cast him into Hell-fire. And what will make you know exactly what Hell-fire is? It spares not (any sinner), nor does it leave (anything unburnt)! Burning the skins! Over it are nineteen (angels as guardians and keepers of Hell).﴾

The Great Fire

Masrur was walking among the tyrants and oppressors towards the Hell-fire while being escorted by the angels. He was dragging his feet and was feeling stunned because of all the successive surprises. He imagined himself in a nightmare that had come true.

The first of these surprises was the resurrection. In the worldly life, he did not believe in the Day of Resurrection. When he heard about monotheism and the final reckoning, he laughed boisterously.

Ironically he asked, "When we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we indeed be resurrected? Verily, this we have been promised, we and our fathers before (us)! This is only the tales of the ancients!"

The second was his book of reckoning. All the details of his life, from his birth to death, were recorded in pages.

The third surprise was the trial in which he was judged to abide in Hell-fire forever.

One of the angels pointed to a wide gate and said, "This is the widest gate of the seven gates of Hell-fire. It leads to the great fire wherein you will neither die nor live."

Masrur thought about the angel's words and his fear reached extreme heights. He knew two features of existence; life and death but the angel talked about a new feature in which there is neither life nor death. What a horrible feature!

They reached the gate.

An angel received them and asked them, "Did there not come to you Messengers from amongst you, reciting unto you Allah's verses and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?"

They tried to reply but could not.

Masrur thought to escape and the angel said ironically, "I read your minds! Masrur wants to escape and it is impossible. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to *Saqar*."

The Thoughts of Tyrants

The angel who received the tyrants ceased talking so as to give them a chance to think of his words.

Then he resumed his words saying, "Look at the external world for the last time as *Saqar* will make you forget everything. You will forget your names and worldly affairs. Allah (Exalted and Glorified be He) will take revenge on you as you corrupted the system of life."

These words terrified the tyrants and destroyed their hopes of escaping the Fire.

Masrur thought of the old days in which he did all he wanted without being questioned. They were sweet days but now they were all gone.

He was greatly stunned by the continual surprises that faced him. He looked around, thinking there might be a door or a window to escape through. Unfortunately, he did not find any.

Pharaoh was greatly enraged by Haman. He imagined that Haman was the main reason for all these disasters and catastrophes. Haman prostrated before him, thus he thought himself to be a god. Also, Haman falsely told him that Musa was a magician and when the magicians prostrated themselves before Allah, the Almighty, he told him that it was a great conspiracy against the national security.

Pharaoh hoped to strangle or to lunge at Haman as he had put him into this miserable situation.

Qarun was thinking of his treasures. Where did they go? In the worldly life he was convinced that money could buy every thing, even people. Every person had his price.

He was thinking to bribe the angels, but to his great dilemma, he did not know where his treasures had gone!

Those Who Lost Their Own Souls

Silently the angel walked. It was easy for him to read the minds of those who were being dragged into the fire of Hell.

Among the leading personalities of this group was the king who had disputed with Ibrahim (Abraham) about his Lord. The king was recalling his meeting with Ibrahim, as this meeting was a crucial point in his life. It was also the cause of his being among the most notorious criminals who were now being dragged by the angels to the fire of Hell.

Being very distinguished and distinctive in the world of crime and delusion those criminals were worthy of being dragged to a similarly distinguished and distinct fire, which is called *Saqar*.

The king was now recalling the whole situation from the beginning. The story began from the moment he had deified himself and pretended to be a god. He then heard of Ibrahim, the man who was calling people to worship Allah the One and Only, the only true God of all mankind. It was a new and a strange idea for the king and so he summoned Ibrahim.

Ibrahim confidently said, "My Lord is the One Who gives life and causes death."

And here the king arrogantly said, "I can give life and I can cause death."

How foolish and stupid he was! The king was now thinking of this on his way to the fire of Hell.

Ibrahim had a stronger proof and he had said, ﴿ *Verily! Allah causes the sun to rise from the east; then cause it you to rise from the west.* ﴾

The king remembered very well how he had been utterly defeated that day and how false and fragile his argument appeared to be but despite this he had insisted on his false pretence of divinity. Ibrahim had exposed him but his vanity and arrogance prevented him from listening to the voice of reason and from admitting his mistake and so his end was in Hell.

In the end the king believed himself to be the loser. He ruled for only twenty years then he became sick and died. The twenty years now appeared to be nothing beside the eternity that he would have to spend in the fire of Hell.

Regret was eating up his heart. How could he have been so foolish in life! He was now so wretched as there was no hope to fix anything today. The time for second chances was finished and now the time of punishment had begun.

Al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah was another eminent personality among this group. He was thinking of what had happened to him in his worldly life. The Quraysh had wanted to have his opinion about some of the Qur'anic verses and the question was clear and definite, "Are those verses the words of mankind or the words of Allah, the Almighty?"

Al-Walid flattered the Quraysh and falsely said that the verses were merely the result of magic practiced by human beings. His verdict completely satisfied the Quraysh but unfortunately it led al-Walid himself directly to *Saqar*.

The Bribe of Qarun

Qarun was feeling quite hesitant about whether or not he should ask the angel now about his treasures and wealth or postpone the question until he enters *Saqar*.

The angel could read his mind and so he approached him saying, "You are worried about your treasures and you want to know where they have gone. Do not worry! They are not lost; they are all in *Saqar* being heated in the fire of Hell waiting for you to brand your forehead, your flank and your back everyday."

Qarun said, "Do not misunderstand me. I did not want them for myself. I was only thinking of giving them as a gift to the angels to express my admiration or to do something good in general."

The angel said, "I have not laughed since Hell-fire was created and had it not been for this your words would have made me laugh heartily. Let me tell you one thing, angels do not accept gifts or better say they do not accept bribes and your suggestion is very humorous. It proves that you are still living with the same thoughts you had in life, where you used to buy anything you desired with your money. Anyway we do not want to waste time in talking nonsense for it is now the time to tell you about *Saqar*."

Almighty Allah describes *Saqar* , ﴿Therefore remind (men) in case the reminder profits (them). The reminder will be received by him who fears (Allah). But it will be avoided by the wretched who will enter the great Fire and made to taste its burning. Wherein he will neither die (to be in rest) nor live (a good living).﴾

This great Fire mentioned in the verse is *Saqar* and it spares no sinner nor leaves anything unburned. The keepers of this great Fire are nineteen angels and its guardian is an angel called *Khazin*.

When the polytheists of Makkah heard these verses, they burst out in sarcastic laughter from the number of angels overseeing Hell-fire.

One of them said, "Nineteen angels! We shall not need so many knights or valiant warriors to defeat them."

Of course these words were merely the outcome of ignorance because had those arrogant polytheists known the truth of this Fire that is never satisfied and the truth of those angels who derive their power directly from the Almighty, they would never have uttered these words.

Inside Saqar

The angel finished his words and said, "I think it is time now to introduce you to *Saqar*. Let the veils be raised from before the fire ... its dwellers have arrived."

The veils were raised, the fire almost burst up with fury and the flames rose high, twisted and then devoured the criminals one by one until nobody was seen anymore.

Let us show the difference between the fire of life and the fire of the Afterlife. The first is neutral, it does not intentionally burn anyone in particular and it can be extinguished with water or other certain substances. However, the fire of the Afterlife is completely loyal to its Creator and is so glad to have the chance to punish the criminals and is never satiated.

Almighty Allah says, ﴿ *On the Day when We will say to Hell-fire: "Are you filled?" It will say: "Are there any more (to come)?"* ﴾

Besides this it can never be extinguished except with a direct command from Allah.

Only minutes after the veils were raised from this awesome fire the group of criminals vanished. They were standing outside, then the flames quickly rose high and carried them inside it while saying, "Taste you the touch of Hell-fire."

Here came the Divine Justice, the terrified yells of the heartless criminals filled the whole space just as the yells of their victims used to fill the earth.

Another characteristic of this great fire is that it neither gives life nor does it cause death. In life, when man's skin is burnt the man dies immediately after suffering great pain. However, in the Afterlife the case is different because when the skin is burnt, it causes great pain but it does not lead to death.

Almighty Allah says, ﴿As often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for other skins.﴾

This means that man will have a different nature in the Afterlife. Death itself will die in the Day of Judgment and all human beings will become eternal. So those who are in Paradise will live in bliss forever and those who are in Hell-fire will live in torment forever.

They Will Cry "O Malik"

It is true that life in Hell-fire generally is unbearable but in *Saqar*, life is even more cruel and miserable because there is no life in the known sense of the word nor is there death which may be a kind of relief. It is an unendurable kind of torment and a constant torment that never stops. It is the kind of torment that makes life impossible but at the same time it does not cause death.

Here Allah, the Almighty, says, ﴿ *But those who disbelieve, (in the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism) for them will be the Fire of Hell-fire. Neither it will have a complete killing effect on them so that they die, nor shall its torment be lightened for them. Thus do We requite every unbeliever?* ﴾

Day after day death becomes more and more of a desired hope and a far off dream. For the sick person, death is a relief from pain but for the sick people of *Saqar*, death is a luxury that they can hardly comprehend.

The people of *Saqar* gathered and decided to forward a petition to Malik the guardian and keeper of Hell-fire. They cried, ﴿ *O Malik (Keeper of Hell-fire)! Let your Lord make an end of us. He will say: Verily you shall abide forever.* ﴾

The petition was so long but the answer was so short because they were worthy of being despised and they were worthy of abiding forever in Hell-fire.

The Food of Hell

Food in general for all creatures is a kind of pleasure but for the people of Hell-fire it is a fierce kind of torture. In other words, in Hell-fire food is not food as we know it and does not have the characteristics of the food we know in life because food in Hell-fire will neither nourish nor avail against hunger.

Food in Hell-fire is a punishment rather than a source of nourishment. The first dish served in Hell-fire is the fruit of the tree of *Zaqqum*, which is an extremely bitter and horrible tree in Hell-fire and here we find the Almighty, says, ﴿ *You verily will eat of the trees of Zaqqum. Then you will fill your bellies therewith. And drink boiling water on top of it, so you will drink (that) like thirsty camels! That will be their entertainment on the Day of Recompense!* ﴾

Thus these criminals are worthy of such food and in the past the dogs of the kings used to eat better kinds of food than the people themselves.

Leaving the first dish to the second one we find it even worst for it is nothing but the filth that results from the washing of wounds. It is not only disgusting but also its effects the stomach and the intestine. It is extremely horrible. It is a kind of food that burns the throat and the esophagus even before reaching the stomach. It is the cause of severe pain and terrible suffering that goes beyond description.

In addition to this there is nothing called water in Hell-fire.

Allah, the Almighty says, ﴿And the dwellers of the Fire will call to the dwellers of Paradise: "Pour on us some water or anything that Allah has provided you with." They will say: "Both (water and provision) Allah has forbidden to the unbelievers. "Who took their religion as an amusement and play, and the life of the world deceived them." So this Day We shall forget them as they forgot their meeting of this Day, and as they used to reject Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.).﴾

Maqrur Reclining in Paradise

Maqrur received his book of reckoning with his right hand. His account before Allah did not take a long time.

Maqrur was called in life because of his belief in monotheism. He was a true Muslim who believed in the Day of Judgment. However he never imagined with his limited human mind, that Allah is that Powerful and that the Day of Judgment would be so momentous. Maqrur was simply amazed.

Maqrur was walking when a very polite and elegant man stopped him asking, "Are you Maqrur?"

He answered, "Yes... Why?"

The man said, "I am the one responsible for the servants in your palace and I came to show you your place in Paradise. I have one of your cars with me so would you like us to ride it or do you prefer the plane?"

Maqrur heard the man but he could understand nothing of his words. He knew neither cars nor planes for they had not yet been invented in his time so he asked the man about their meaning and he told him that they were means of transportation.

The man also told Maqrur that he has a number of private cars and planes and he has palaces in the country and another that overlooks the sea and a yacht for sea trips. All his wishes and desires will be fulfilled at once.

Maqrur said, "What did I do to deserve all this generosity?"

The man said, "You have said a true word before a tyrannical *Sultan*. That is what you have done sir and your life was the price of your honesty. Allah hears and sees everything and He was content with you and so you became among the inhabitants of Paradise. Tell me how would you like us to go?"

Maqrur said, "Walking if you please."

The man said, "Your wish is my command."

The man walked and with him went Maqrur, who was amazed by the gardens they were passing. He had never seen such gardens before! They were not like any of the gardens he had seen in life and so he asked the man, "What is this?"

His guide said, "This is one of your gardens but it is nothing like the other ones we are going to see now."

Dazzling Colors

The world of color is full of inspiration and secrets. Colors give various impressions, for instance there is a color that gives the impression of coldness and another that gives the impression of heat. There is a color that has a mysterious and adventurous impression, like the color blue whereas the color green gives the impression of relief and tranquility.

In our life we only know the seven colors of the spectrum but in the Afterlife there will be other colors that will fill man with pleasant emotions like confidence, internal peace and joy.

Let us draw together a beautiful picture of spring in one of the most splendid gardens in the whole world. Imagine the beautiful roses and flowers with their various colors smiling on the green branches and welcoming springtime. Imagine also the trees that are full of fruit of different colors and tastes.

Do you think that this wonderful picture is anywhere close to the picture of Paradise? If you think so then you are wrong because Paradise is something that cannot be imagined as the Prophet (pbuh) said, *"Paradise is full of things that no eye has ever seen and no ear has ever heard and no heart can ever compass."*

This means that no matter how hard we try to imagine and draw pictures of Paradise, our minds and imaginations will always remain inadequate and they will take us nowhere close to the true image of Paradise.

Maqrur was dazzled and his admiration exceeded all boundaries. He kept on walking and turning his head from one scene to another and he could not help saying, "How Exalted and Glorified is the God Who has created all this beauty."

The guide who was accompanying Maqrur said, "This is the best thing that could be said here."

Maqrur was astonished because he did not utter the words. He was only talking to himself so how did the guide know what he had been thinking.

The guide felt his astonishment and so he said, "One of my powers is to read your mind and to know your wishes. We have finally reached your palace in Paradise."

A Palace in Paradise

The guide stopped in front of a huge gate that had the name of Maqrur written on it in gold.

Maqrur said, "This is my name."

The guide said, "This is your palace and some of your possessions in Paradise."

The door was then opened and Maqrur stood amazed at the scene. He saw a splendid garden that led to an extremely beautiful palace that seemed to be the product of imagination.

The guide walked in front of Maqrur, who was turning his head in great amazement watching trees and flowers that he had never seen before and fruit that looked like those of life but tasted totally different.

As they came nearer to the palace Maqrur was dazzled and amazed at its architecture for he had never seen anything so beautiful on earth.

At the door of the palace a group of immortal boys were waiting for them. They stood in two rows and bowed to Maqrur as he was walking behind his guide.

Maqrur greeted them, then in a whispering voice he asked his guide about their identity.

The guide said, "They are at your service and they will be responsible for serving your food and drink."

For a moment Maqrur stood thinking of his past misery in life, how he used to live in a cave in the mountain, whose door was only a rock that used to be moved by the winds and storms of winter.

Reading his mind, the guide smiled and then pointed to a wide balcony that overlooked an extremely tremendous and splendid scene.

In front of the palace there were running rivers.

The guide said, "Look at these rivers. There is a river of milk, another of honey and another of wine. However, the milk, honey and wine are not like those you have known in your life."

Rivers of Milk

Maqrur asked his guide, "How many rooms are there in this palace?"

The guide answered, "Thirty."

Maqrur said laughing, "Why are there so many rooms and how can I live in all these rooms alone?"

The guide said, "Allah (Exalted and Glorified be He) says, ﴿ *But those who fear Allah and keep their duty to their Lord (Allah), for them are built lofty rooms; one above another under which rivers flow (i.e. Paradise).* ﴾"

Maqrur said, "I may lose my way in all these rooms and even more I may feel afraid to live alone in them."

The guide said, "You will not lose your way and you will not be afraid for you will not live alone in this palace."

Maqrur said, "But I am alone as you see."

The guide said, "You have not seen the Houris . However, if after you see them you still feel the same, all you have to do is to order the one responsible for the architecture to make the palace three or two rooms only and he will fulfill your wish in seconds. Now what do you want to see?"

Maqrur said, "I would like to see the rivers of milk, honey and wine. Tell me, do they taste the same as they were in the worldly life?"

The guide said, "Let us go there so you may try them yourself."

They walked towards the running rivers and there Maqrur looked at the milk flowing in his land. It was so white and the honey was like gold. The wine reflected so many colors that it was difficult to identify its true color.

Maqrur wanted to dip his finger into the river to taste the milk but one of the immortal boys immediately filled a glass from the river and served it to him.

Maqrur drank the milk and felt that he had never ever tasted anything that sweet before. He asked the guide about this and the guide told him that in life the milk used to come from between the places of excretions and blood but in the Afterlife it is the direct product of Allah's Hands.

Maqrur stood for a long time in front of the three rivers, then his guide told him that there was someone waiting for him in the palace and so he must not let him wait for long.

Changes

Maqrur had a feeling that his guide wanted him to go but the scene of the three rivers was too beautiful to let go.

He was thirsty but the moment he drank from the milk he felt certain changes within himself. In other words he felt he was given a new kind of life.

He felt that his old senses were replaced by other different and stronger senses. In life he used to see but now his sight was different and the same thing applied to his senses of touch and taste.

Thus Maqrur turned to his guide and said, "There must have been something in the milk for I feel as strong and healthy as a young man."

The guide said, "You are now a young man."

The guide then gave Maqrur a mirror and told him to look at himself.

Maqrur was astonished. In the mirror he did not see the familiar face he used to know in life, which had always reflected the features of a miserable and oppressed man. Maqrur now saw himself in a new image. His face reflected the internal peace and tranquility he felt and the blessings he was enjoying.

Once again the guide urged Maqrur to return to the palace saying, "There is someone waiting for you in the palace."

Maqrur asked, "Who is it? I did not know many people in life."

The guide said, "Your people are waiting for you."

Maqrur said laughing, "I have no people and I have no relatives."

The guide said, "You are talking about your previous life but you must forget all about it and you must know that you are now living in the Afterlife where everything is different, so free yourself from the chains of life."

Maqrur stood thinking for a while then he said, "You are right, my mind is still attached to my previous life. Who did you say is waiting for me?"

The guide said, "Your people are waiting and they are Allah's Gift to you. I am speaking about the Houris."

The Houris

Maqrur and his guide finally reached the palace. There the guide went on showing Maqrur the rooms of the palace, the furniture and everything there.

They then came to a suite in the palace and here the guide stopped and said to Maqrur, "I cannot be your guide in that suite. It is that of your wife or wives of the Houris and nobody can enter it except you."

Maqrur listened to his guide with great anxiety. In life he never knew how to talk to a lady or how to win a lady's admiration. He would always feel afraid whenever they were around him. So how could he manage to deal with this new wife of the Houris?

On his way up the stairs to meet the Houri, he was thinking that maybe she would not like him or maybe she would not be interested in him or even more she may dislike him.

Finally Maqrur stood at the door and knocked gently, then he opened the door and entered. Once he entered he stood stunned at the beauty of the Houri, which had never existed on earth and has the power to illuminate time and place together.

Maqrur did not know what to say to her, the Houri then moved and said, "Why are you so late? Anyway welcome in Paradise. You do not know how much I missed you. I have

waited thousands of years for you but I knew that the day we shall meet was approaching."

Maqrur looked at her while she was speaking and she read his mind and said, "Do you think that I am beautiful? Do you think that I deserve you?"

Maqrur said, "I think you are much more than I deserve."

She said, "Do not think with your worldly mind. Allah is pleased with you and I am His Gift to you."

While contemplating her beauty Maqrur said, "O Allah, You are so Exalted and Glorified."

A Love Story

Maqrur thus tasted the life of bliss in Paradise and on top of the material blessings came the Houris.

The existence of this shy and beautiful Houri in his life was enough to change his feelings towards existence and his own self.

In a moment of serenity Maqrur talked to his wife about his inner feelings.

He said, "Every moment I feel more grateful to Allah. He blessed me with the ability of giving and receiving love though I had forgotten love a long time ago."

The Houri said, "You have not forgotten love a long time ago as you say, your life under the shade of faith was a continuous love story. Worship and religion in their true essence are nothing but love. Your faith was your love for Allah and when you called people to monotheism it was out of your love for them. Paradise is the place where all those who love Allah gather, so how can you say that you have forgotten love?!"

Maqrur thought about the Houri's words. He felt that her words filled him with inner peace and tranquility. Maqrur then lived his life in Paradise enjoying Allah's Blessings to His believing servants. On top of these blessings came the Houri whose love filled his whole world with peace, contentment and tranquility.

In the beginning Maqrur thought that the earth of Paradise was made out of pure silver and its dust was made out of musk and saffron, this was how it seemed at first. However, he then discovered that the dust of Paradise was made out of something that looked like musk but that was actually much more beautiful than musk. This was the case with everything in Paradise, i.e. the internal truth of anything is much more beautiful than its external appearance.

The thing he admired most in Paradise was its air and light that looked like a spring of love that knows nothing except joy.

The light in Paradise was not the light of a sun or a moon or a lamp but it was rather the light of the Great Lord.

Allah, the Almighty, says, ﴿*And the earth shone with the light of its Lord.*﴾

The Position of the Egyptian

In Paradise Maqrur acquired new habits. In the morning he starts by swimming in the interior pool. He then rides his horse for an hour in his extended gardens. After this he returns to have his breakfast and then relax in the exterior pool and there the Houri entertains him with her interesting talk.

However this day in particular Maqrur rode his horse for a longer distance and then he discovered that he entered a land that was not his. He tried to find his way back to his land but he could not. While he was standing confused thinking what to do, the owner of the land appeared.

Seeing Maqrur, the owner of the land approached him and welcomed him heartily saying, "My honorable guest, welcome. Where is your residence in Paradise?"

Maqrur dismounted his horse and said, "I came from the other bank of the river."

Then they shook hands and Maqrur asked him, "Who is my generous host?"

The host said, "I am an Egyptian who lived in the era of Musa and Pharaoh. I had a position against Pharaoh and this position was the reason, after Allah's Mercy on me, for my entering Paradise. Let us go to my palace which is not far from here to have a talk."

They reached the man's palace and sat in one of his gardens talking with each other.

Maqrur felt very curious and so he said, "Tell me about your story."

The man gave Maqrur his book and said, "Open page seventy seven and you will see what I mean."

Maqrur opened the page and once he did so, a tape with the voice and image started and Maqrur could see an important meeting taking place in the palace of Pharaoh. In this meeting he saw Pharaoh, Haman and a number of the most distinguished people at that time in Egypt.

Almighty Allah says, *﴿Pharaoh said, 'Leave me to kill Musa (Moses), and let him call his Lord (to stop me from killing him)! I fear that he may change your religion, or that he may cause mischief to appear in the land.﴾*

All the attendants agreed on this suggestion except one man, a believer from the people of Pharaoh who was hiding his faith.

Allah says, *﴿And a believing man of Pharaoh's family, who hid his faith said: Would you kill a man because he says: My Lord is Allah, and he has come to you with clear signs (proofs) from your Lord? And if he is a liar, upon him will be (the sin of) his lie; but if he is telling the truth, then some of that (calamity) wherewith he threatens you will befall on you." Verily, Allah guides not one who is a Musrif (a polytheist, or a murderer who sheds blood without a right, or those who commit great sins, oppressor, transgressor), a liar! "O my people! Yours is the kingdom this day, you are uppermost in the land. But who will save us from the Torment of Allah, should it befall us?﴾*

The page was then folded and the host said to Maqrur, "This believing man from the people of Pharaoh is the one sitting in front of you now and this was the situation that caused me to enter Paradise."

A New Friendship

Maqrur and Pharaoh's relative soon became friends. After a few moments of their acquaintance they were talking and laughing together. The Egyptian man was so amiable and cultured. He acquired profound knowledge about the peoples' conditions and cultures.

Maqrur listened to the man's story with Pharaoh and then he asked him, "What did Pharaoh say when he heard what you had said?"

The believing man laughed and said, "Pharaoh looked at me with great anger and he said, 'I show you only that which I see correct, and I guide you only to the path of right policy.' Are not those the same words of the tyrants everywhere and at any time?"

Maqrur related to his new friend his story with Masrur. Maqrur told his friend how Masrur used to call himself the great master and how he forced his people to worship him just as Pharaoh had done, when he told his people that he is their superior lord.

The two friends then went on talking and the Egyptian man said to Maqrur, "The magicians of Pharaoh arrived a few days ago and they live in palaces near here. I would like so much to introduce you to them. I am sure you will like their company."

Maqrur asked, "What magicians?"

The Egyptian believer said, "Oh, it seems that you lived in an era before ours. Well, those magicians were gathered by Pharaoh to make the magic of Musa of no effect but instead they prostrated to Musa's God. As a result of this, Pharaoh killed them, cut their arms and legs and crucified them. He tore them into pieces, that was the apparent case. However, he did not know that by this action he sent them to Paradise and he himself to Hell-fire with his viziers and leaders of the soldiers. He thought himself a genius!"

Maqrur thought of his words and he said, "You are right. All the tyrants in the world were foolish and stubborn. They destroyed everything thinking they are doing a good thing. I wonder what those tyrants are doing now in Hell-fire. How can they bear its fire that is never extinguished?"

The Egyptian believer said, "Let us have a look at them without rejoicing at their misfortune. Look!"

Pharaoh and Masrur

Maqrur looked at the monitor that the Egyptian believer was pointing at and there he saw Pharaoh and Masrur rolling over with the other criminals in the bottom of Hell-fire.

Pharaoh was neither living nor dying and Masrur was hallucinating with nonsense words only trying to get himself out of this torment. The fire was eating his clothes that were made of tar and it was burning his skin, his flesh, his blood and his nerves. He was screaming out of pain with the fire that eats up everything in him, feeling himself dying but at the same time never dying.

What a horrible feeling and what a horrible torment for all the people of Hell-fire. There are times when they feel they are dying but they soon find out that this is an illusion. They can never die because death itself has died and this means that the torment and suffering will be eternal for them. Every time the fire eats up their skins, flesh, blood and bones, they find that they are replaced by new ones and the suffering starts once more.

The gold that Qarun had treasured in life is in Hell-fire with him. It is turned into huge, long chains that are heated and then used to tie his body. Those chains burn his sides, his forehead, his back and his chest and he cries out of pain. He cries again but nobody pities him. Nobody asks him why he is crying or why he is regretting, repenting or asking for another chance.

The people in Hell-fire were like monkeys that are burnt with fire and are jumping everywhere looking for water to extinguish themselves. However, in Hell-fire there is no water.

Maqrur said, "Might and Power belong only to Allah. O Allah I am not rejoicing at their misfortune."

The Egyptian man said, "It is a terrifying scene. Anyway this is Allah's absolute Justice to them as they wasted and corrupted their life."

The Blessings in Paradise

Maqrur was facing a little problem. He was wondering whether he should get his wife, the beautiful Houri, a ring or a necklace as a gift. But where he could get the money from, and where he could get the gift from!

Maqrur felt he could not ask his servant and so he asked his friend the Egyptian who said, "Call the one responsible for your palace and you will see what he can do for you."

So Maqrur said to the one responsible for his palace, "I want to get my wife a gift."

The man said, "At your service."

He then gave Maqrur a key to the room of gifts and he took him there and showed him the treasury where all the gifts, which were fit for both men and women were found.

Those precious gifts were made up of diamonds, rubies and chrysolite. Here we remember the *hadith* of the Prophet (pbuh) where he said, "*In Paradise, there is what no eye has ever seen and what no ear has ever heard and what no mind can ever compass.*"

Maqrur asked, "How can we pay for such tremendous gifts?"

The man said, "It seems that my master is still thinking with his worldly mind. Sir, those gifts are all yours and you can do whatever you want with them. You can give them to whomever you choose."

Maqrur chose a necklace made of diamonds and a crown made of red rubies and green chrysolite and then he went to his wife.

Maqrur said to her, "I brought you a present."

She said, "You are my greatest present."

Maqrur took the jewels out of his pocket and he put the necklace on his wife's neck and the crown on her head. Although the jewels were so beautiful the Houri was even more so, making the jewels vanish beside her outstanding beauty.

Maqrur said to himself, "Allah is so Glorified. How can one find a proper gift for such beauty? Had not it been better if I had brought her a rose?"

The Torment of Hell-fire

Whenever Allah would finish the account of a group from the polytheistic humans and Jinn, the gates of Hell-fire opened.

Once they entered Hell-fire the torment would start and usually the conflict would begin between the latest groups and the former groups.

Here is the conflict between the weak and the arrogant.

Allah, the Almighty, says, ﴿And, when they will dispute in the Fire, the weak will say to those who were arrogant; "Verily! We followed you, can you then take from us some portion of the Fire? "Those who were arrogant will say: "We are all (together) in this (Fire)! Verily Allah has judged between (His) slaves!﴾

This is the repeated scene in Hell-fire whenever a new group enters. The weak are blaming the arrogant for misleading them, the arrogant are already suffering in Hell-fire and so they feel that what the weak are saying is nonsense.

Almighty Allah tells us about another repeated scene in Hell-fire, ﴿And those in the Hell-Fire will say to the keepers (angels) of Hell-fire, "Call upon your Lord to lighten for us the torment for a day! "They will say: "Did there not come to you, your Messengers with (clear) evidences and signs? They will say: "Yes." They will reply: "Then call (as you like)! And the invocation of the unbelievers is nothing but in error!﴾

So, there is no hope for the people in Hell-fire. They live in everlasting torment. The fire is never extinguished and there is no death. There is no relief from suffering, only constant grief and eternal regret.

This is the nature of Hell-fire.

Dreams in Paradise

One time Maqrur was sitting in the garden of his palace with his friend, the Egyptian believer, they were talking about Paradise and its blessings.

The Egyptian believer said, "Man is the being whose hopes never end and whose aspirations never finish. There is no way to achieve such endless hopes except in Paradise because it is endless and eternal. Tell me what are your hopes, Maqrur?"

Maqrur thought for a while and said, "To tell you the truth, I am in great but sweet confusion. My mind is full of thousands of dreams and hopes but I do not know where to start. Maybe you can tell me about your own dreams."

The Egyptian believer said, "My first dream or wish is to see Musa. He was a strong man. Allah spoke to him. I had the honor of defending him and of resisting the idea of killing him. I also want to see the honorable Prophet in whose book, the Ever-Glorious Qur'an, my story was mentioned. Then I would like to see Nuh (Noah), 'Isa (Jesus) and Ibrahim (Abraham) (may the blessings of Allah be upon them all). I think that meeting all those prophets and talking with them would be a great pleasure. After this I would like to meet the prominent personalities, who greatly affected human history. Imagine what it would be like to pray behind all those honorable prophets. Surely you know that all the prophets were sent with one

message as Allah says, ﴿ *Worship Allah! You have no other god but Him.* ﴾ This is what all the prophets said to their people. Their legislation might have varied according to time and place but the essence of their legislation was the same, namely monotheism. You will find in your library books the stories of all the messengers and prophets and you will also find all the divine books, the original script, before having their words altered. What about you, Maqrur?"

Maqrur said, "I shall go with you if Allah wills."

The Peak of All Blessings

In Paradise the blessings are endless. The people of Paradise know no envy nor hatred but only love; human love and Divine love. They do not use money but despite this, all they long to have they have immediately.

Allah, the Almighty, has bought from the believers their souls and their money in return for Paradise, man of course the one who benefits the most from this deal. At the same time however nobody can enter Paradise due to his good deeds because Paradise is much greater and surmounts all good deeds, people enter Paradise only by Allah's Mercy.

The Ever-Glorious Qur'an speaks about Allah's devoted servants in Paradise saying, *﴿For them there will be a known provision (in Paradise). Fruits; and they shall be honored in the Gardens of delight (Paradise). Facing one another on thrones. Round them will be passed a cup of pure wine; white, delicious to the drinkers. Neither they will have Ghoul (any kind of hurt, abdominal pain, headache, a sin, etc.) from that, nor will they suffer intoxication therefrom. And with them will be chaste females, restraining their glances (desiring none except their husbands), with wide and beautiful eyes. (Delicate and pure) as if they were (hidden) eggs (well) preserved.﴾*

These previous verses describe the material blessings of Paradise and in return the spiritual blessings are represented in the closeness to Allah, which is mentioned in more than one verse.

The Prophet (pbuh) said about Paradise, *"In Paradise, there is what no eye has ever seen and what no ear has ever heard and what no mind has ever compass."*

Great as it is, there is something yet much greater. When all the polytheists enter Hell-fire and all the believers enter Paradise, Allah reveals Himself to His servants.

Allah, the Almighty, says, ﴿Some faces that Day shall be shining and radiant. Looking at their Lord (Allah).﴾

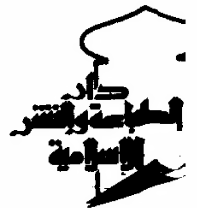
And here the believers bow hastily to their Lord but Allah says to them, *"Raise your heads for this is not a place to bow in. O my servants I have only called you to have the blessing of seeing Me so do you have now any wish left?"*

Thus they will say, "What else can we ask for after You have saved us from Hell-fire and made us enter Paradise, giving us the pleasure of looking at Your Honorable Face."

Allah will then say, *"Yes there is something left."*

They will say, "What is it our Lord?"

He will say, *"To be content with you forever and never to be angry with you."*



Face to Face takes you on a journey from the life of the world to that of the Hereafter. During this journey you will become acquainted with the true believer Maqrur, who sacrificed his life in the way of faith. Also you will get to meet the unbeliever Masrur, who sought tyranny in the land, suppressing all of those who were under his rule.

You are invited to watch the very moments of death, resurrection and reckoning. Finally, you are given the opportunity to view both the realms of Paradise with its blessings and gardens and Hell-fire with the various levels that it contains.

Although the names of this story are of an imaginary nature, the events and the places in which they take place are true to life. Perhaps these events have not yet occurred but undoubtedly, one day they will.

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